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FIRES Los Angeles

TERRORISM New Orleans

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PREPPER

SURVIVAL GUIDE®

WHAT'S INSIDE

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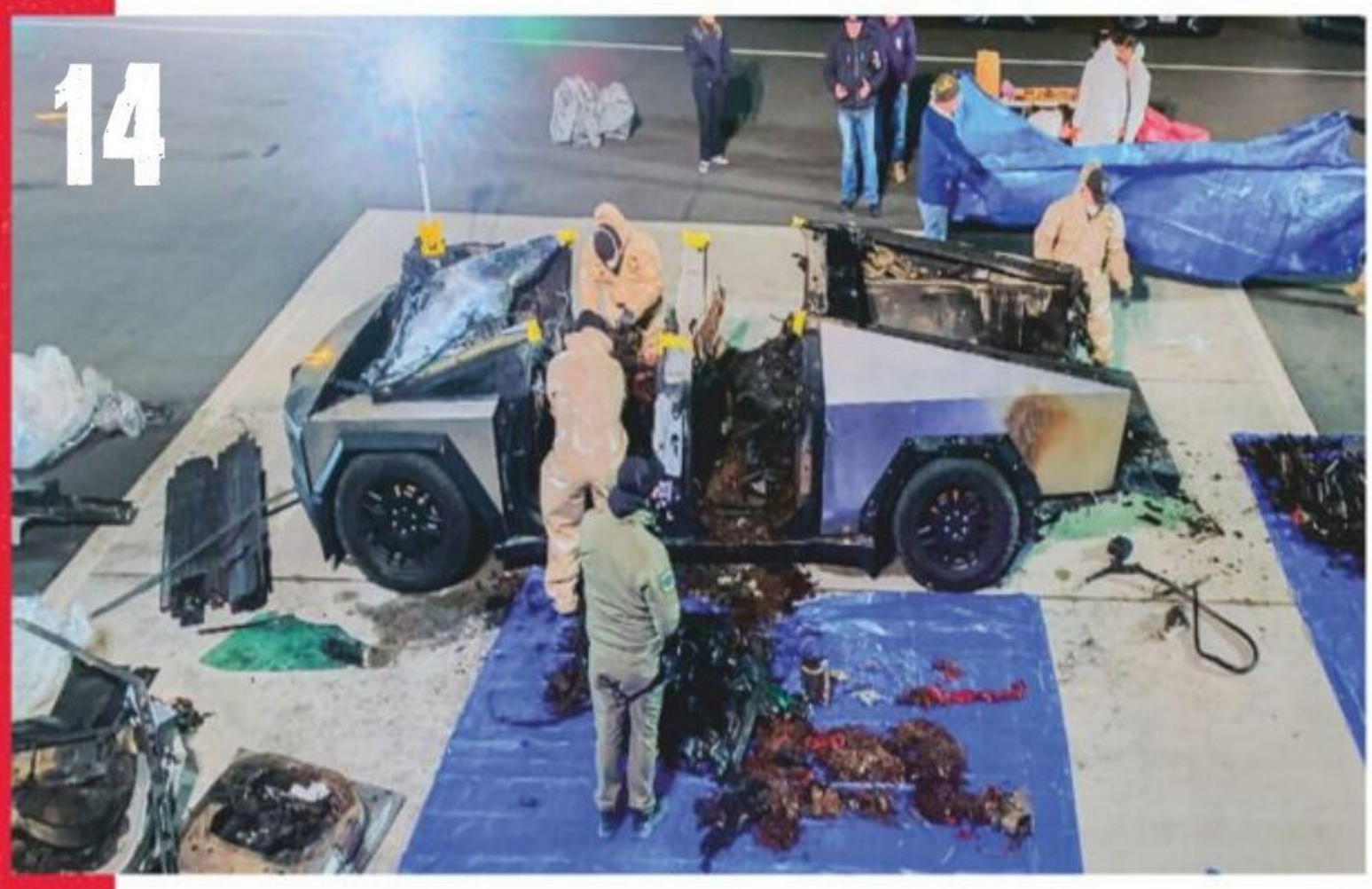

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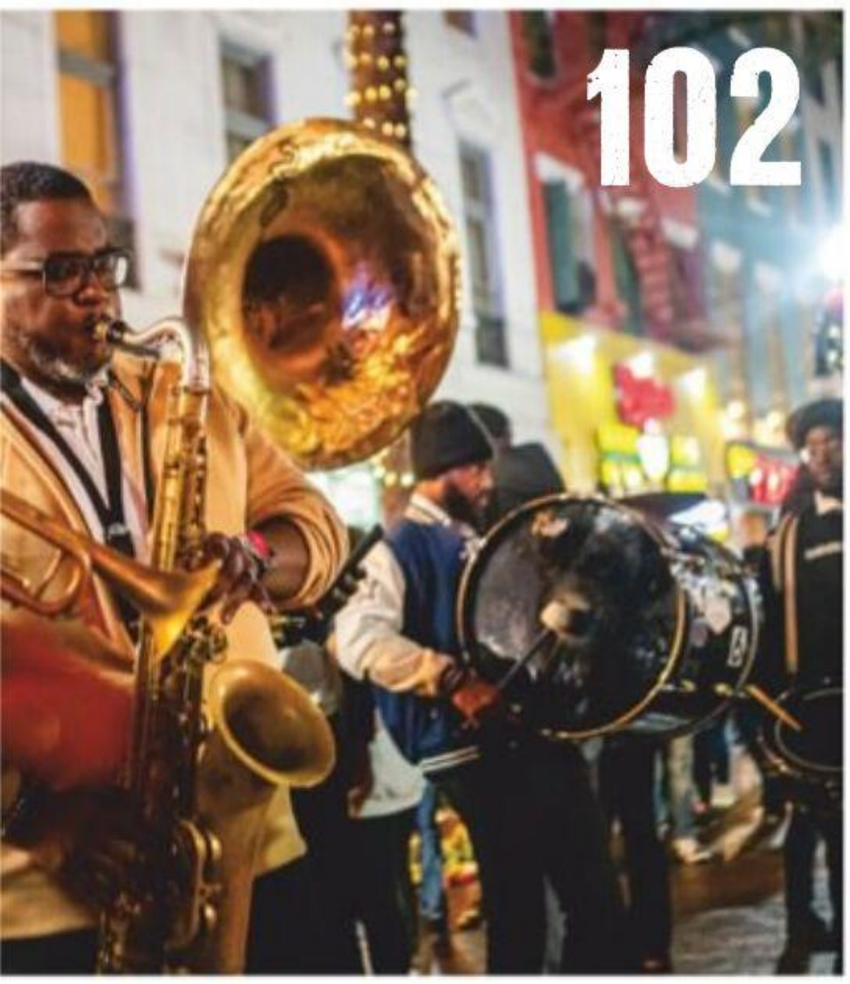

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The advice given in this magazine is the opinion of the author of each article, based on their personal experiences and knowledge. The right response to a disaster may not be the same in all situations. Articles are for informational purposes only. The publisher accepts no responsibility for injuries or liability arising from relying upon information contained herein. In the event of an emergency, follow the advice of first responders and trained professionals. Have a preparedness plan researched from multiple sources and avoid high-risk situations. Follow all applicable federal, state and local laws regarding firearm ownership, carry and use.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to our special urban disasters edition of *Prepper Survival Guide*! It feels like everywhere we turn, there's something major happening. From the hurricane and floods in North Carolina to wildfires in Los Angeles to terrorist attacks in New Orleans and Las Vegas, it seems as though the world is getting scarier by the day.

Fortunately, we can help. We've put together a series of articles geared toward helping you keep your family safe, come what may. We'll show you what you can do about urban threats. You'll find tips and strategies for evacuations as well as for sheltering in place at home. There is also a section on security and defense, so as to keep you protected from hazards that come on two legs.

As with every issue of *PSG*, no scare tactics, no endless lists of stuff to buy. Our focus is on practical, actionable information.

Jim Cobb, Editor-in-Chief

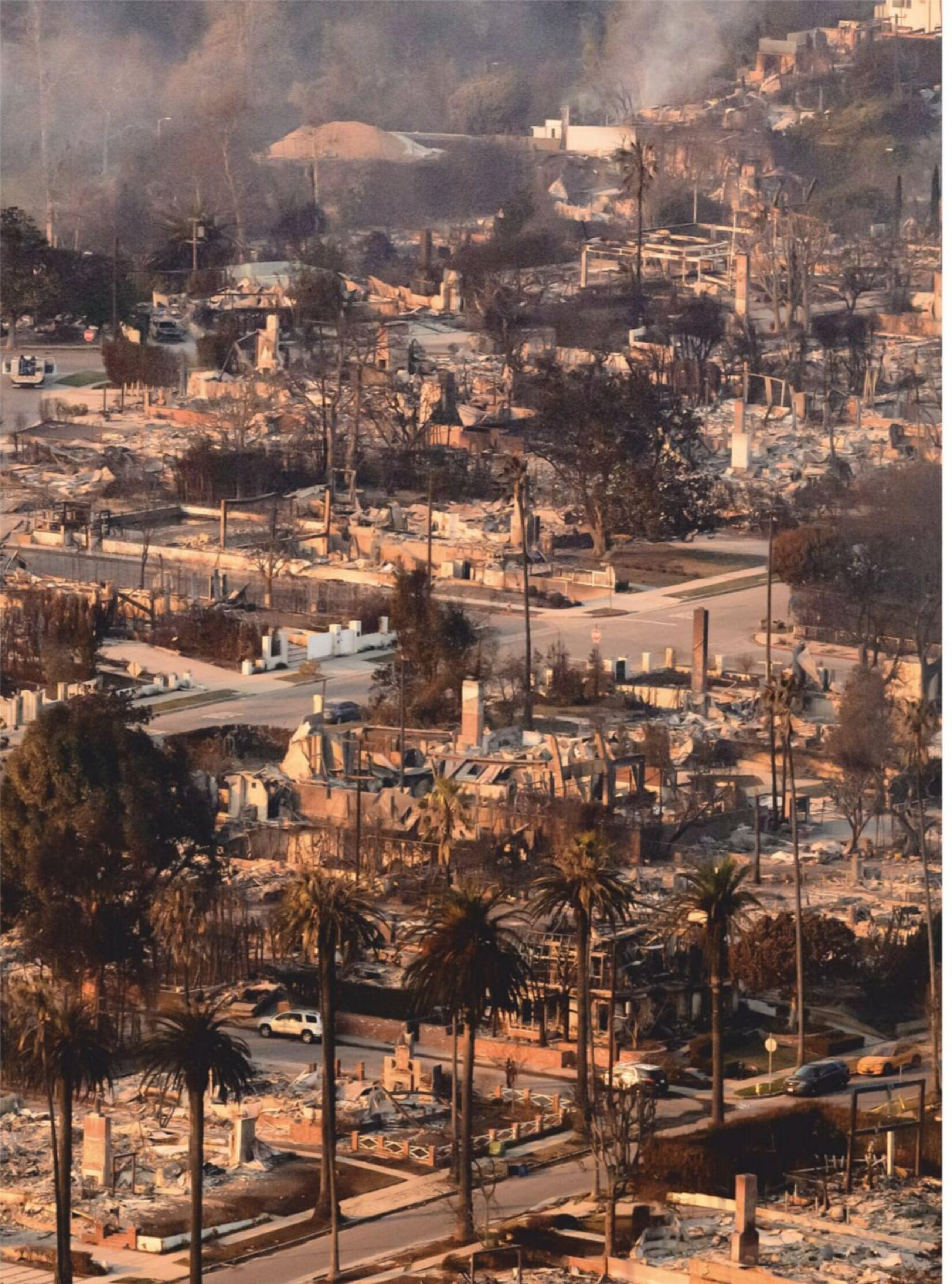
For submission information or other editorial queries, please email Jim Cobb at jim@survivalweekly.com. We'd love to hear what you think of *Prepper Survival Guide*!

[SECTION / 01]

URBAN THREATS

THE DANGERS ARE MANY, AND SOME ARE QUITE SERIOUS—BUT IF YOU PLAN AHEAD, YOU'LL KNOW HOW TO HANDLE THEM.

The wildfires that swept through parts of Los Angeles in January 2025 were absolutely brutal.



When a house catches fire, you may only have a few minutes at most to escape.

WILDFIRES

HELL ON EARTH

HOW TO PREPARE FOR RAGING INFERNOS

BY JIM COBB

IN EARLY 2025, SEVERAL WILDFIRES BROKE OUT IN THE LOS ANGELES AREA. THE FIRE ZONES TOTALED MORE THAN 60 SQUARE MILES, TWICE THE SIZE OF MANHATTAN, NEW YORK. TO CALL THIS AN APOCALYPTIC DISASTER IS UNDERSELLING IT.

IMAGINE IT'S THE MIDDLE of the day but the smoke is so thick it blots out the sun. There are towering flames on either side of the road. As you creep along the highway, you can't see more than about 15 yards ahead. Shapes loom on the side of the road, slowly resolving into stalled or abandoned vehicles. Ash and burning embers fall like snow as it gets hotter and hotter in your car.

While wildfires are nothing new, it seems like they get more frequent, as well as larger and more damaging, every year. If you live in an area at risk for wildfires, you need to take commonsense precautions.

WILDFIRE CAUSES

Every fire needs three things to burn: fuel, oxygen and heat. This is true of every flame from the smallest match to a huge conflagration. Areas of large forest tracts provide plenty of fuel. Combine that with the hot, dry Santa Ana winds in California and you have all the makings for an inferno that just needs a spark to set it off.

The majority of wildfires are found to have been started by people—a lit cigarette tossed out the window of a car or a campfire that isn't properly extinguished. Nature isn't

Evacuation isn't always as easy as jumping in a car and flying down the highway. Sometimes there's more work involved.

entirely innocent, of course. Many fires are started by lightning or a storm that knocks down a power line. Once the fire starts, windy conditions can fan the flames quickly and send burning embers aloft for miles.

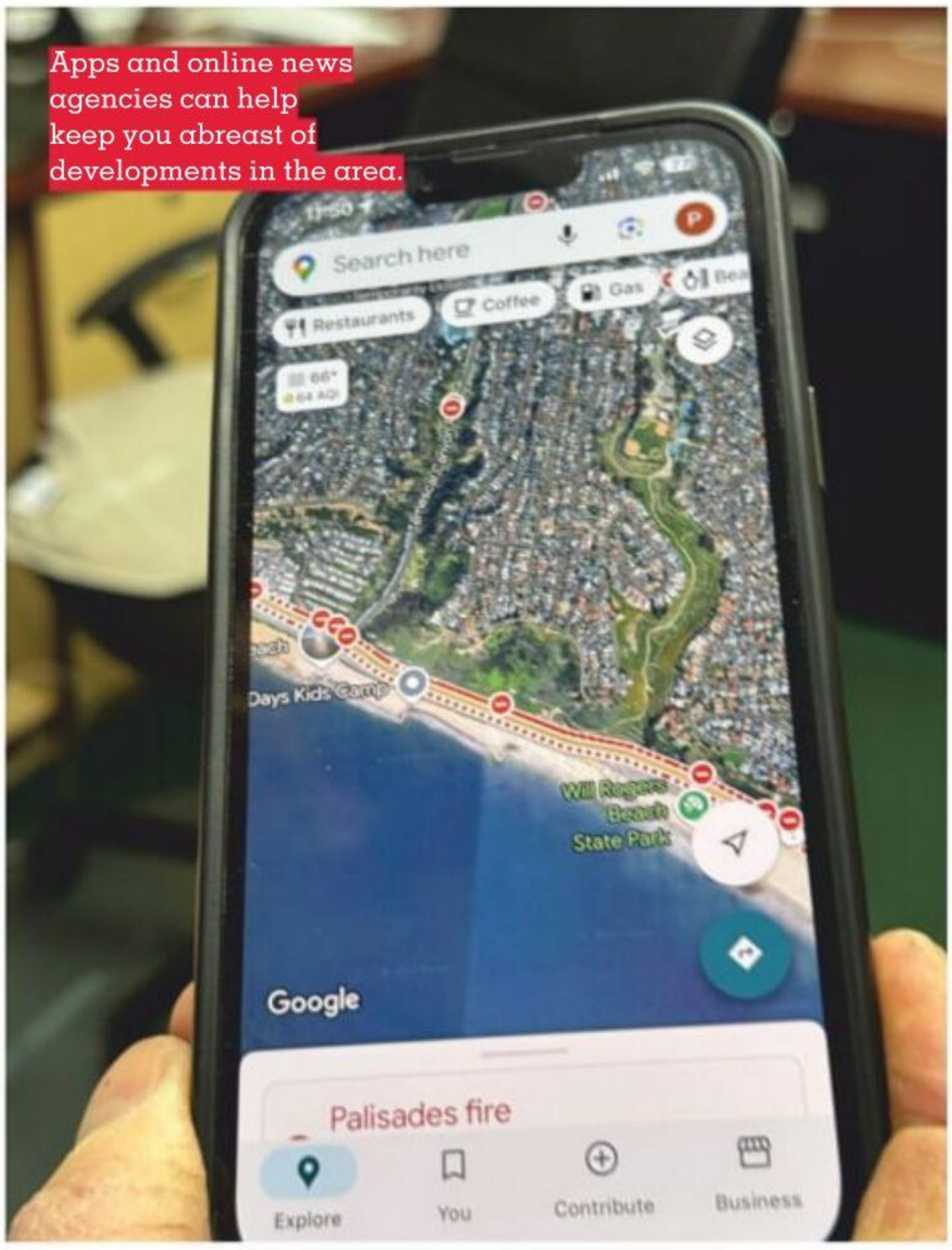
WILDFIRE PREPARATIONS

There are several things you can do in order to be prepared. Be sure to have at least a couple of radios that will tune in National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) broadcasts. While we often think of NOAA's Weather Radio as just sending out weather reports, it is actually what is known as an "all hazards" service. NOAA will broadcast alerts and warnings pertaining to a wide range of situations, including earthquakes, wildfires, and even public safety information, such as 911 outages or Amber Alerts.

Many communities in wildfire territory will also have localized alert systems in place. These likely require some sort of registration in order to add your cellphone number to their list so that you can receive text messages.

Know the various evacuation routes that will be used and enforced, should the need arise. While it is always best to get out ahead of the crowd, wildfires can be unpredictable and a community that was once thought safe might suddenly find itself at high risk. If the authorities are telling residents in your area to leave, do so immediately. Keep in mind that they may have much more information about the situation than they've released to the public. By doing your homework ahead of time, you'll know where to go and how to get there.

When building or renovating, use fire-resistant materials whenever possible. Install water spigots on at least two sides of the home and make sure you have hoses long enough to reach all the way around the house. Consider having another spigot installed 15 or 20 yards away from the home as well.



Apps and online news agencies can help keep you abreast of developments in the area.

Keep wildfire risk in mind while you landscape, too. Avoid planting bushes and shrubs near the house. If a wildfire is potentially headed your way, take some time to move any flammable materials away from your home, creating a fire-resistant zone of at least 10 yards in every direction away from the structure.

Identify a room in the home that can be used as an emergency shelter. It should be a room in which you can close all doors and windows as well as air vents, with the goal being to limit exposure to smoke from outside. Invest in a decent air cleaner that you can keep in that room to use for as long as you have power.

Few people relish the idea of leaving everything behind, possibly lost forever. But remember that stuff can largely be replaced; lives cannot. Even irreplaceable mementos are less important than survival.

Smoke from wildfires can irritate throats and lungs, as well as affect visibility, for miles around.

PETS AND OTHER ANIMALS

Evacuating with animals can be difficult. Plan ahead for how you'll do it and make sure you have any necessary gear and supplies on hand at all times. This would include leashes and crates for smaller animals, as well as extra food and water. Have a copy of their immunization records with the gear, too. If you end up having to use a community shelter, they may require proof that the animal is up to date on their shots. If you have larger animals, including livestock, make plans now for where you can take them, should you need to evacuate them. In some areas, county fairgrounds might be opened up for this purpose. Find out from the county emergency management team what plans might be in place already. Failing that, talk to family and friends who might be able to assist.

WILDFIRE EMERGENCY KIT

Putting together a small emergency kit is another great step in the right direction. This is a collection of gear and supplies that you can keep on hand at home. This is not the same as an evacuation kit or bug out bag (BOB), though there might be some overlap with the contents.

Start with a good supply of N95 face masks. Have at least three or four masks per person in the family. It is better to have extras than to not have enough to go around. Even better would be high-quality respirators, but those tend to be a little beyond the budget of the average person.

Pick up a good-quality crank-powered radio. It should be able to tune in AM/FM as well as NOAA broadcasts. This is a backup in case the power goes out and you can't use a television or other device. Along the same lines, purchase a few portable power banks that you can use to charge your cellphone. Another item you'll want if the power goes out is a flashlight, preferably a few of them. Don't forget extra batteries, too.

Fire extinguishers are a must. You should have one in or near the kitchen already, but pick up at least one more to keep with your wildfire emergency supplies.

DURING A WILDFIRE

Again, if the authorities are telling people in your area to evacuate, listen to them and hit the road. Fighting a raging wildfire with a garden hose is nobody's idea of a fun time.

Monitor radio broadcasts to keep abreast of the situation. Remember that wildfires can be unpredictable, and they move with great speed.

Use your N95 masks when the air quality diminishes, whether you're at home or evacuating. Swim goggles can also be helpful to reduce eye irritation.

Social media can be a great tool to keep family and friends informed about the situation. It can also be used to alert authorities to dangerous situations. Quite often, phone calls won't go through during a crisis due to overloaded systems. However, text messages will still get through in many cases. Be aware that apps like Zello need an internet connection in order to

function, and won't work if the internet service in your area goes down.

If you evacuate but find yourself trapped, call 911 and give them your location. They might not be able to get to you immediately, but they'll do everything they can to help.

AFTER THE WILDFIRE

If you've evacuated, do not try to return home until the all-clear announcement has been made by the authorities. Let them make sure the area is safe, otherwise you could end up injured or worse.

Even after the authorities have said it is OK to return, there will likely be smoldering debris, hot spots and other dangers. Tread very carefully and keep a close eye on pets and livestock.

Use NIOSH-certified dust masks or other similar respirators when handling debris to help cut down on inhaling dust and ash. Wetting things down will assist with that as well.

Contact your insurance provider for instructions on filing a claim. Take numerous photos and shoot video to document damages to your home and property.

ALWAYS KEEP MASKS AND EYE PROTECTION IN EVERY EVACUATION KIT.

The devastation from wildfires can be truly heart-wrenching.

TERROR

FEAR & CHAOS

On Jan. 1, 2025, several people were killed when a domestic terrorist drove a vehicle through a crowd, then fired upon police.

TSM!

WHAT IF YOU ARE ATTACKED?

BY JIM COBB

INDIVIDUAL ACTS OF TERRORISM, SUCH AS SUICIDE BOMBERS, ARE TRULY HORRENDOUS, BUT THEY AREN'T QUITE ON THE WORLD-ENDING LEVEL AS EMP OR NUCLEAR WAR, RIGHT? THINK AGAIN. AT ITS CORE, THE GOAL OF TERRORISM IS TO CREATE CHAOS AND FEAR. TERRORISTS DO THIS THROUGH BOMBINGS, MASS SHOOTINGS AND ATTACKS AGAINST UTILITIES. THEY WANT CITIZENS AFRAID OF WHAT COULD HAPPEN NEXT.

A SCARED POPULACE doesn't want to leave the house. And the authorities might not let them.

On Jan. 1, 2025, two incidents occurred to drive fear into the general populace. At about 3:15 a.m. local time, Shamsud Din Jabbar, a 42-year-old from Texas, drove a white truck into a crowd of people on Bourbon Street in New Orleans, striking several of them and killing 14. He opened fire on police and was killed by return fire. Not too long afterward, Matthew Livelsberger, age 37, parked a Tesla Cybertruck in front of the Trump International Hotel in Las Vegas and blew it up. It's been reported that he shot himself in the head immediately before the detonation occurred. Seven people were injured by the explosion, but Livelsberger was the only one who died.

What if incidents like these were to become commonplace? What if terrorists advance from homemade explosives and driving through crowds to

At 8:39 a.m. on Jan. 1, 2025, in Las Vegas, a Tesla exploded in front of Trump International Hotel. It wasn't an accident.

even more deadly tactics? What can you do to be better prepared if terrorism hits close to home?

TRAINING

There are two primary areas of knowledge and skill that you should pursue if you wish to be able to assist in a real way during a terrorist attack. We're not suggesting you make either of these avenues your life's work, but to be successful in any endeavor in either area requires you to be competent. These just aren't skills you can realistically pick up watching YouTube, much less reading novels.

DEFENSE

If you are going to carry a weapon, you should know how to use it safely and properly. If you put a wrench in your pocket, does that make you a mechanic? Of course not. In much the same manner, strapping a handgun to your belt doesn't make you John Wick.

Firearms training should be realistic. Sending lead downrange on a summer afternoon is fun, but odds are pretty good that if you ever need to use your weapon in a real defense situation, it won't be quite as laid-back. Find instructors who will train you to use your weapon competently in low-light, chaotic situations.

Try this next time you go to the range: Do 10 or 15 jumping jacks to get your blood pumping, then grab your weapon and fire off two rounds at the target. Compare the results to when you're calm and then work to improve.

Don't stop with a handgun, either. Look into real-world martial arts training. Find a school that focuses training on realistic scenarios rather than tournament fighting. A huge bonus is a school that also provides weapons training, such as the use of a knife or short staff. The skills you learn will give you confidence.

FIRST AID

If you have the grave misfortune to be involved in a terror attack, you will be a first responder. There will almost certainly be a

Taking a class in practical, real-world self-defense can give you the skills you need to prevail.

THE GOAL OF TERRORISM IS TO CREATE AS MUCH DISORDER AND CHAOS AS THEY POSSIBLY CAN.

need for medical assistance. While it would be great if everyone had the time and finances to pursue full training in emergency medicine, that's just not feasible for most people.

However, you can certainly look into training with the Red Cross or other similar agencies. Seek out classes that will teach you how to control bleeding, use tourniquets and keep people alive until professional medical assistance is on the scene.

Every attack and incident adds more trauma and fear. But don't let that fear dictate your life.

DON'T LET FEAR RUN YOUR LIFE

In prepper-related social media, I have often seen people talking about how they don't take vacations, attend concerts or go to the movies because they feel doing so exposes them to greater risks of terror attacks or other dangers. Don't let fear dictate what you can and cannot do. Yes, leaving the house will probably expose you to a ton of risks, including drunk drivers on the highway, kids skateboarding down the sidewalk, even a sudden rainstorm. You might even get heartburn from the burger joint down the road. We only go around this world once. Take advantage of any opportunities you have to see more of it. Just do it with a touch of caution and a lot of common sense and you should be just fine.

Speak with your local fire department and they may be able to direct you to local training opportunities. Another option is to reach out to your local hospitals, as they often offer first aid, CPR and similar classes.

Training comes first, but it is followed closely by carrying at least a minimum amount of first-aid supplies with you.

A trauma kit will go well beyond adhesive bandages and aspirin and will include the supplies needed to treat severe injuries, provided you know how to use them.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

A common slogan these days is, "If you see something, say something." But the only way you will indeed notice potential trouble is if you're paying attention. Simply put, this means taking off the blinders.

Situational awareness isn't going to turn you into Jason Bourne, but it will help you notice anomalies more quickly and thus

give you a chance to react before things get worse. For example, you see a young man enter the store with a backpack. This isn't anything too unusual; lots of guys carry packs. But this guy is sweating, despite the air conditioning running full blast, and it might have something to do with the heavy coat he's wearing in the middle of August. He could be a potential shoplifter—or have something other than shopping on his mind. Of course, it might be completely innocent. He's nervous because he has a crush on one of the employees and the coat is hiding the flowers he's brought to surprise her. But until you see those roses, he might bear further watching.

In other words, keep your eyes off your phone while you're moving about. The world is a beautiful place, but you'll miss it if you're not paying attention.

FIGHT BACK

If something happens, fight back with all you have. If you're unarmed, grab whatever you can and strike out at the terrorist. Hit, kick, bite, scratch—do whatever it takes to take them down.

Don't be afraid to be the first person there to take action. In the vast majority of scenarios, others around you will join in—they just need to see someone else jump in first.

LISTEN TO AUTHORITIES

Follow any instructions given by law enforcement or first responders. After a mass shooting, don't jump up and run at the police officers when you see them approaching. If you do so, your very bad day is probably going to get even worse. Stay put and don't move until you're told to do so. Just because you know what the terrorist looked like, it doesn't mean they do.

If you are armed, verbally make that known and follow their instructions. Never approach an officer with a weapon in your hand.

In situations like what followed the Boston Marathon bombing, if you're told to stay indoors while law enforcement conducts searches, do so. The last thing you want is to end up prone on the ground while they fit you with shiny bracelets because you just happen to look vaguely like the terrorist they are seeking.

Terror attacks in the United States have been infrequent but seem to be growing in regularity. It's best to be prepared.

You should be competent with anything you decide to carry with you, including weapons as well as first-aid supplies. Seek out training from well-respected instructors and practice your skills regularly to keep them sharp.

FLOODS

TORRENTIAL STORMS

WHAT TO DO WHEN THE WATERS RISE

BY JIM COBB

IN LATE SEPTEMBER 2024, HURRICANE HELENE MADE LANDFALL ALONG THE EASTERN UNITED STATES. IT BROUGHT UNPRECEDENTED RAINFALL, WINDS AND FLOODING TO MANY AREAS, PARTICULARLY WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA.

Floods are one of the most destructive forces in nature.

Research whether your home is at risk for floods. If it is, then get to work improving its ability to withstand water damage. Consider investing in empty sandbags that you can fill and place in front of doors.

MORE THAN 100 PEOPLE were killed in North Carolina alone, with hundreds more still unaccounted for. All roads in western North Carolina were closed. Montreat and Swannanoa in the Black Mountains region of the state were largely destroyed. Over four months later, thousands of people are still homeless.

Flooding is one of the most destructive disasters known to man, with effects that can linger for years. Preparing for it starts long before the rain begins.

MITIGATE FLOOD IMPACTS

There are several things you can do to help reduce the impact floods will have on you and your home. One tool you can use to help determine your risk is found online at msc.fema.gov/portal/search. This is the FEMA Flood Map Service Center. You enter a location, such as a ZIP code, and it will provide you with a detailed map showing flood plains and similar information.

Talk to your insurance agent about flood insurance. It isn't typically included with home insurance and must be purchased separately. The cost can be steep, but if you live in an area subject to seasonal flooding, the expense will probably be worth it.

Use barriers whenever they make sense. Seawalls and the like are common in coastal areas. Inland residents can use rock or brick walls. These can help

Flood damage can take months, even years, to rectify.

prevent water from going all the way to your front door. As you landscape your property, keep drainage in mind. Always give water an escape route.

If you have a basement, made sure you have a working sump pump installed. A backup, battery-operated pump isn't the worst idea. An alarm that will alert you to the presence of water in the basement is also recommended, especially if you don't routinely spend a lot of time down there.

Inspect your home's foundation from time to time and look for problem areas, such as cracks. Use hydraulic cement or a similar product to repair holes, cracks and the like.

Clean and maintain your gutters on a regular basis. Make sure the downspouts are clear. If you're not able to get up on a ladder to do it yourself safely, find someone who can. Check online for local handymen. Another route is to contact the local high school shop teacher and see if they know a trustworthy student who might be interested in earning a few bucks cleaning the gutters for you. Another option is to check into one of the various gutter shield products on the market and see if there's one that will work for your situation.

Flood water can be contaminated with sewage, chemicals and more. But sometimes you have no choice but to wade into it.

WHEN FLOODS HIT

Floods can happen slowly and they can happen suddenly. You might think you're in the clear and find out otherwise very quickly.

If you're able to evacuate ahead of predicted flooding, that's going to be your best bet. If you do so, follow established evacuation routes as best you can. Do not drive around barricades. While yes, you might know a shortcut, you might find out the hard way that the shortcut is 3 feet underwater. This is one case where you really do want to just follow the instructions you're given. Those running the show likely know more than you do about the conditions in the area.

But evacuation might not be feasible for you, depending on your overall situation. And, quite frankly, some floods happen so fast that the option to evacuate is snatched away from you entirely.

Trying to travel through floodwaters is treacherous. Just 6 inches of moving water can be enough to knock you off your feet. A foot of water is all it takes to move a car and carry it away. The water will also hide possible hazards, including all manner of

GET YOUR INSURANCE COMPANY INVOLVED JUST AS SOON AS POSSIBLE SO THEY CAN GET A CLAIM STARTED.

debris that could be sharp, jagged and just plain unpleasant to stumble upon.

Whether you evacuate or not, life jackets for all members of the family might be a wise investment. They can mean the difference between life and death if someone is swept away by the current.

Bear in mind that the water swirling around you is about as far from clean as it gets. It may be contaminated with all manner of nastiness, including sewage, chemicals and more. You really don't want to be swimming around in it, let alone exposing open wounds to it.

With that in mind, you may be better off seeking high ground at home. Get to the highest level of your home as you can. Do not go into a closed-up attic, as you could end up trapped there. Some agencies recommend keeping an ax in the attic for that eventuality. That might work in some cases, but if you have a metal roof, that might not turn out so well for you. If you can safely navigate a ladder, getting out onto the roof is a better option than a closed attic, all other things being equal. Not only will you not be trapped in an enclosed space, it will be far easier for rescue crews to find you.

FLOOD CLEANUP

This is where it can get pretty nasty. The first thing to do is to document everything. Take photos and video of every room that has any sort of damage, no matter how major or minor. Fair warning, this can be emotionally devastating, particularly if the damages include precious mementos and the like. Salvage what you can, but you might not be able to save everything.

Contact your insurance company before going any further, so as to ensure there aren't any specific steps that you must take before you start cleaning and getting your life back in order.

At a minimum, always wear gloves and goggles. Masks are also recommended in case you're dealing with mold spores.

Remember what we said about floodwater being contaminated? Throw away any food that might have come into contact with it. When in doubt, toss it.

If you're able to access your home within the first 24 to 48 hours and get the interior dried out pretty well, you might be able to avoid mold. That's no guarantee, but it's a good start. Keep everything as well ventilated as you can. If you have power, use fans to move air around to help dry things.

Soft surfaces, such as carpet (including carpet padding), bedding and upholstered furniture should

It's important to get wet mattresses, bedding and other materials out of the house as soon as you can after the flood recedes.

DON'T LEAVE PETS BEHIND

If you evacuate, take your pets with you. They depend on their owners, so don't let them down. If for some reason you can't bring them along, don't leave them tied to anything, such as poles or fences. If the water rises, they can't get away from it, resulting in tragedy. A colleague of mine spent some time assisting rescue efforts after Hurricane Katrina hit, and he reported seeing countless dogs that had perished because they were trapped.

be removed from the home and tossed.

If more than 10 square feet of drywall have been damaged, experts recommend removing and replacing it. Use a utility knife to score an outline around the damage, then remove the drywall. If there is wet insulation behind it, out that goes as well.

Clean hard surfaces like countertops and cabinets with a strong bleach mixture (1 cup of bleach to 1 gallon of clean water).

Unfortunately, disasters like floods bring a lot of scumbags out of the woodwork. You're likely to be approached by more than one outfit that offers all sorts of remediation services for cheap. Thoroughly vet any service provider before you hire them. Make sure your insurance company is involved in that decision process as well.

If you saw this from your office window, your best bet would be to wait it out or find a back way home.

CROWD

RIOT

CONTROL

HOW TO HANDLE INCIDENTS OF CIVIL UNREST

BY JIM COBB

AS PART OF THE FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION, WE ARE GUARANTEED "THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE PEACEABLY TO ASSEMBLE." HOWEVER, WHEN IT COMES TO PROTESTS AND OTHER SUCH DEMONSTRATIONS, PEOPLE OFTEN REMEMBER THE RIGHT TO ASSEMBLE BUT THEY SOMETIMES FORGET THE PART ABOUT DOING SO PEACEABLY.

GRANTED, THE LACK OF peace may be the result of outside influences, such as groups with opposing viewpoints. But, for those caught in the middle, it hardly matters who threw the first punch or brick. The goal in situations like this is to get out of the way as quickly as possible and let those directly involved sort things out, possibly with the assistance of law enforcement.

Those who live, work or travel in urban areas are much more at risk of experiencing civil unrest up close and personal than their country cousins. However, depending on the situation, there can be impacts felt quite a ways off from what we might consider to be ground zero.

TYPES OF CIVIL UNREST

In the simplest terms, civil unrest is a disruption in the normal social order. It can take many forms. One of the most common is the protest or demonstration. A group of people feel there is a wrong that must be righted and vocalize their opinions en masse. They may carry

If things take a turn, it won't matter which side you're on in the beginning; it can get ugly fast.

signs or perhaps march as a group to a specific destination, such as a state capital building. The point is to create awareness of the problem and hopefully inspire others to help work toward a solution.

On occasion, a demonstration may go sideways and end up a riot. When you have a large number of people who are emotionally charged and ramped up, it doesn't take much to tip the balance toward violence. One person smashes a window and it's off to the races. Mob mentality takes hold quickly and people can feel somewhat invisible as part of the group, which leads to lowered inhibitions. They may damage buildings and vehicles as well as attack those they perceive to have opposing viewpoints.

It is worth mentioning that not all riots happen because an organized protest goes awry. Sometimes people just get squirrelly and, as we noted earlier, the negative behavior can feed on itself. In recent years, there have been numerous incidents that came to be called "wildings," where groups of young people ran amok, causing damage and wreaking havoc with no obvious rhyme or reason.

One other type of civil disobedience is far less violent but can have a larger overall impact. If the employees of a given company or industry decide to go on strike, whatever goods or services they provide may become rare or nonexistent for a time. Which, of course, is the entire point of a strike.

Not all demonstrations turn violent, but that's always a risk and why they should be avoided whenever possible.

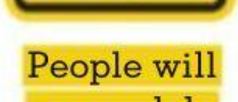
The workers want changes made, such as more pay or better working conditions, and are leveraging the public's need or desire for their products or services to get what they want.

Let's say the trucking industry decided to go on strike. Many retailers operate on what is called "Just in Time" inventory programs, which means they don't have large stockrooms filled with product like they did years ago. Instead, product is ordered as it is sold and what comes in on the truck goes right out on the shelf. If those trucks stop running, those shelves will remain empty. While there will always be so-called scabs, people who will perform the job when the workers are on strike, they are generally very few in number and won't be able to fully pick up the slack.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

One of the best tools in your arsenal is your ability to pay attention to the world around you. News reports as well as social media can help clue you in on developing situations in your area. Common sense plays a factor in this as well. If you learn there is a demonstration planned downtown tomorrow, that might not be the best day to go shopping there. Or, if you're at work and you find out there is a protest march happening somewhere along your normal commute route, figure out a detour that will take you well around it.

Along those same lines, if you get wind of



People will say and do things in a large group that they would never do if they were by themselves. Mob mentality is a very real thing, and it can be dangerous.

Even demonstrations that begin with peaceful intentions can turn violent quickly and without much warning.

A TRUCKERS STRIKE CAN SERIOUSLY IMPACT THE STOCK LEVELS AT THE STORES THEY SERVICE.

an upcoming strike that may impact your ability to replenish your supply of certain items, consider stocking up a bit. To continue with our truckers strike example, if you have a little advance warning of one, that would be a great time to make an extra trip to the grocery store to pick up a few extras of what you consider pantry essentials.

Any time you are out in public, and especially when you're in urban areas, you should be paying close attention to the people around you. If you notice that the ebb and flow of the crowd seems to be getting a little more frantic and people are moving swiftly away from a given area, follow suit. Satisfy your curiosity from a safe distance.

RIOT CONTROL

If you find yourself caught up in a bad situation, your No. 1 goal is to beat feet. That's not easy to do, though, when you're shoulder to shoulder with a mob. Here's how to handle this.

First, link arms with those who are with you. Holding hands may suffice but actually linking arms at the elbows is better, as it is not only a stronger connection but it helps everyone stay on their feet. Small children should be carried if at all possible. What you want to avoid here is anyone getting separated from your group.

Next, move across the crowd, not against it. As the crowd moves forward, take your group sideways, weaving in and out between people. You'll never be able to fight against the tide completely, but by wading through it, you can get to a less crowded area. Fight the urge to pull out your phone and shoot video of the riot. Instead, just concentrate on getting you and those with you to safety.

If you are confronted by one or more members of the crowd, regardless of your true feelings on the issue, it is in your best interest to agree with their stated point of view. This is really not the time to dig in your heels and holler back at them.

Once you get free of the mob, keep going and get at least a few blocks away. Then, find a safe place, such as a restaurant or other public place, to stop to catch your breath and plan your next move.

When tensions are high, you truly don't want to be seen as part of the problem.

WHAT TO DO IF POLICE CONFRONT YOU

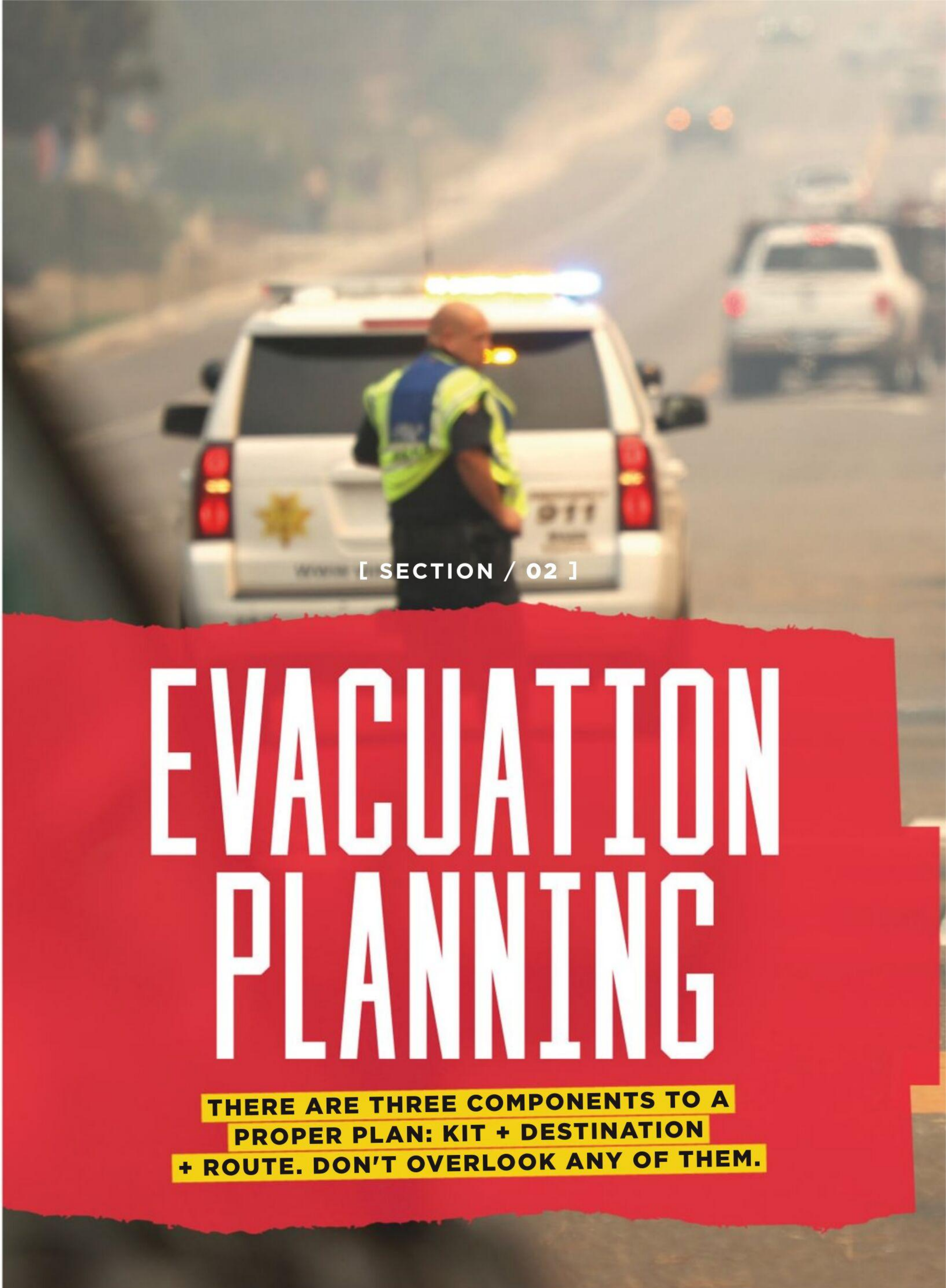
This sounds counterintuitive, but as you make your escape from the riot, avoid law enforcement officers if possible. Keep in mind that they don't know who you are or why you are there. All they will see is that you were seemingly part of the mob and, as such, they may want to stop you from leaving. The last thing you want to do is break free from the crowd and go running at top speed toward law enforcement officers. That's a great way to find out exactly what pepper spray smells like.

If you do end up being confronted by an officer:

1) **Be polite and respectful** Emotions are already going to be running on overdrive; there's no need to add to it. Avoid being confrontational.

2) **Ask if you can go** If you are given permission to leave, do so immediately and don't look back.

3) **If you are told to remain with the officers, tell them you want a lawyer present before you answer any questions** If they ask to see identification, give it to them, but do not offer any additional information.



[SECTION / 02]

EVACUATION PLANNING

THERE ARE THREE COMPONENTS TO A PROPER PLAN: KIT + DESTINATION + ROUTE. DON'T OVERLOOK ANY OF THEM.

Gridlock is not an ideal
place to end up when
you're trying to get out
of town in a hurry.

The time to stock up is well ahead of emergencies. The goal is to have what you need on hand so you don't need to run to stores.

STAY OR GO

TIME TO BEAT FEET

MAKING THE IMPORTANT DECISIONS

BY JIM COBB

THE BASIC RULE I'VE ALWAYS SUGGESTED IS THAT ONE SHOULD HUNKER DOWN AT HOME UNTIL OR UNLESS HOME WAS NO LONGER SAFE. FOR MOST OF US, THIS IS WHERE WE KEEP OUR FOOD AND SUPPLIES. IT IS WHERE WE FEEL THE MOST COMFORTABLE. WE'RE FAMILIAR WITH THE AREA AND HAVE AT LEAST A PASSING KNOWLEDGE OF THOSE AROUND US.

Fuel, including gasoline and propane, are among the resources that tend to get snapped up first.

MAKE A LIST OF SOME RED FLAGS THAT WOULD BE SIGNS FOR YOU TO HIT THE ROAD QUICKLY.

BUT THERE MAY INDEED come a time when we need to hit the road with some degree of quickness. The faster you can get moving, the more likely you'll be ahead of the crowd, rather than stuck on a highway that's become a slowly moving parking lot.

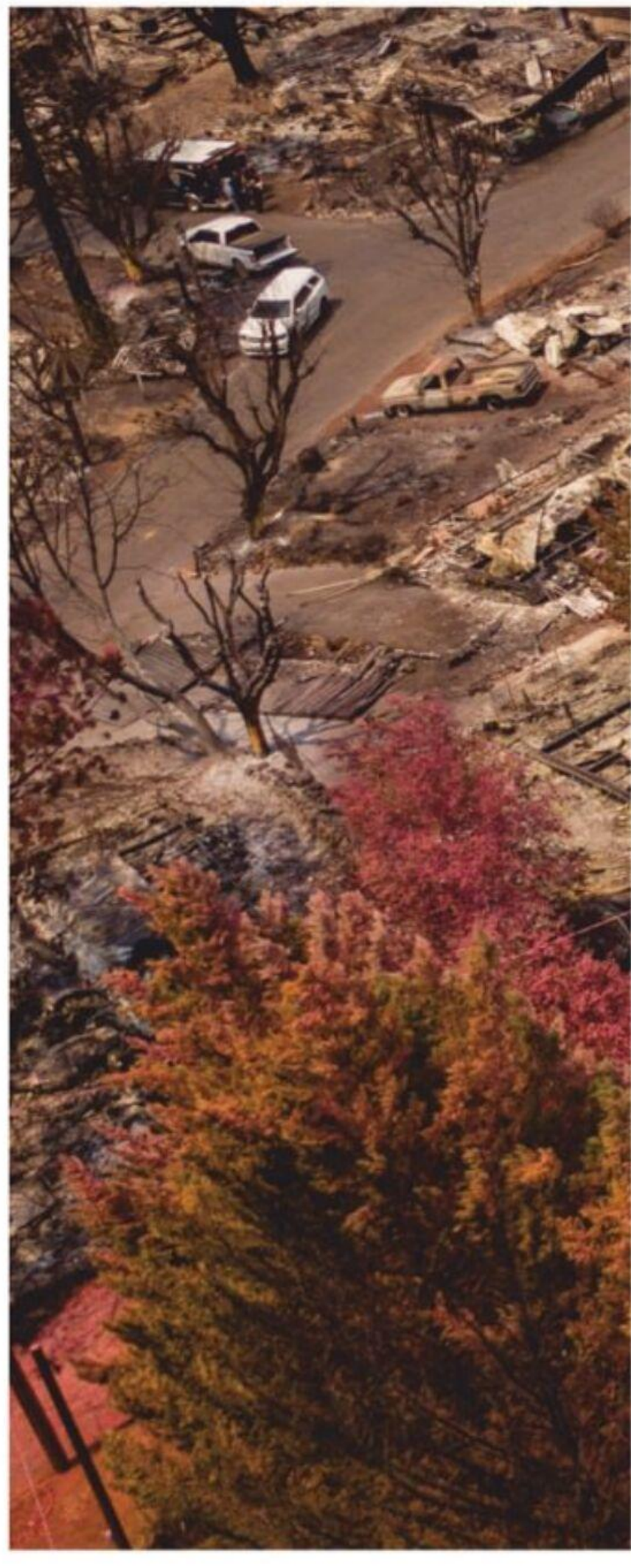
WHAT TO CONSIDER?

To stay or go is a decision that is intensely personal. Some factors that should be taken into account include:

- **Your family composition** Do you have small children? Elderly and/or infirm family members? In some cases, it might not be feasible to even consider evacuating.

- **Your options for transportation** Do you have a reliable vehicle? If you have no way to transport yourself and your family, bugging out might be off the table.

- **Your destination options** Do you have a bug out location or two in mind? The last thing you want to do is hit the road without somewhere you



can go. That's part of the planning process.

In addition, travel in and of itself might be risky, depending on the situation at hand. For example, the disaster itself might be causing problems with road conditions.

It is a delicate balancing act, in that you don't want to just up and go every time something looks sketchy, but you also don't want to hesitate too long and end up in a worse situation.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR?

In some cases, the decision to evacuate might be easy. For example, a wildfire is getting too close for comfort, or a Category 4 hurricane is eyeballing your town for landfall. Other times, it might be that it isn't the initial disaster that's causing concern, but the aftermath.

One approach is to identify a few red flags that will be triggers to loading up the car and getting out of town. Here are some things I would watch for and would prompt me to hit the road with my family.

YOUR FAMILY MAKEUP CAN BE A MAJOR FACTOR IN YOUR DECISION TO HUNKER DOWN AT HOME OR BUG OUT.

Fire retardant sprayed on properties to prevent them from burning could help save you if you decide to stay home.

Understand that evacuating can be a dangerous proposition in many cases. You're going to be exposed to numerous hazards, some of them human. But staying home might be just as risky.

1) Massive damage is imminent I don't live in hurricane country, but if I did and there was a big one targeting my area, I'd probably see that as a good enough reason to go visit Aunt Sally in Iowa for a few days. Same goes if wildfires are headed my way.

2) Impending martial law declaration Personally, I don't want to be stuck in an area that is under martial law, with all the restrictions that might bring. If I feel such a declaration is likely to happen, I'd rather get out ahead of time.

3) Violence headed this way If reliable reports indicate groups of bad actors are moving in my direction, I'd rather get out ahead of them than have to break through their ranks. Stuff can be replaced; my kids cannot.

WHERE TO GET UPDATES?

There are a few resources out there that you should make judicious use of when things look like they could get dicey.

Monitor the social media accounts for local law enforcement agencies as well as the county and state emergency management departments. In many cases, the county level emergency manager or equivalent will be part of the sheriff's department, but they will usually have their own separate social media accounts. Watch for announcements related to evacuation orders as well as general updates on the situation at hand.

On Facebook, if you do a little searching, you may find a "scanner page" that's set

Whenever possible, provide assistance and help those around you, whether you're at home or you've landed elsewhere.

up for your local area. These are becoming more and more common. Basically, one or more people volunteer to monitor police and fire dispatch broadcasts and post summaries of the calls for their followers to see. Quite often, people will comment on the posts with additional information. The discussions will sometimes turn into dumpster fires, but there's still valuable intel to be had.

Keep an eye on news broadcasts, too. While they can often lag a little behind what's being posted by people on social media who are in the thick of it, news crews may have access to information that's not been released to the public yet.

Plan ahead for how you'll deal with your pets, whether you're staying home or hitting the road.

HOW TO GET READY?

So, let's say you're aware of a situation that's currently not an immediate threat, but could turn into one. How can you get ready to boogie, just in case?

Keep the fuel tank in your vehicle at least half full at all times. The last thing you want to do is to hit the road in an emergency when your car is already running on fumes.

Stage your evacuation kits and have them ready to grab. Top off the gear and supplies inside the kits as needed.

Check in with neighbors, particularly those who are elderly or who otherwise might need some help. Make sure they're doing OK and assist if you're able.

If the situation involves wildfire or severe weather, and you're capable of handling this on your own, trim any trees that overhang or are very near the home. Clean up the yard and secure lawn furniture and other items that could be tossed around by high winds.

If flooding is a concern, move electronics and other sensitive items to the upper levels of the home. Time permitting, wrap furniture in plastic sheeting or drop cloths. It isn't ideal, but doing so could reduce damage.

Sheltering in place at home is usually the best plan, but only if it's safe to do so. There are many circumstances, including wildfires, hurricanes, and even some types of civil unrest, where hitting the road ahead of the crisis is your best option.

BUGGING OUT ISN'T ALWAYS IDEAL

It is a common misconception, even among those who have been involved with prepping for quite some time, that bugging out should always be your primary plan in an emergency. I'm not quite certain why that is, but I suspect movies and novels have a lot to do with it. I mean, there's something to be said for the high-flung adventures of the typical lone wolf hero who is trekking on foot across the country to rescue his family or just find his way back home.

Don't be so eager to bug out in a crisis. Yes, there are definitely times when that is going to be the best solution and you should plan for it. At the same time, you need to determine some criteria as to when it would make sense for you to do so rather than staying home and availing yourself of the supplies and gear you've so painstakingly compiled.

BUG OUT BAGS

WHAT TO PACK?

SET UP YOUR KITS AHEAD OF TIME

BY JIM COBB

IT'S TIME TO GO! WHAT SHOULD YOU GRAB? HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU MIGHT NEED?

Be sure to pack a small supply of any needed prescription medications.

A well-stocked and good-quality first-aid kit should absolutely be part of your evacuation supplies.

KNOW THAT IF YOU ENTER OFFICIAL SHELTERS, YOU MAY BE SEARCHED AND ANY WEAPONS WILL BE TAKEN.

WHEN THE DECISION IS made to beat feet and head for safer pastures, it's really too late to start putting together an evacuation kit. This is something that should be largely done in advance, with perhaps just a few last-minute additions on the way out the door.

In the wake of the California wildfires, there was a lot of discussion in the media, including social media outlets, about what to pack before you evacuate. There were lots of questions about what's important to take and what can or should be left behind. We're going to look at one approach to bug out bags.

FORCED VACATION

A good way to start this process is to envision this scenario. Let's say your spouse or significant other surprises you with a three-day weekend vacation. What would you pack?

You'd probably start with clothing. It's only a few days, so you won't need much. Stick with things that are comfortable but durable. It isn't a fashion show, so you can skip the fancy duds.

- Pants: one or two pairs
- Shirts: two or three
- Underwear: four pairs
- Socks: four pairs

Always pack a few more pairs of underwear and socks than you think you'll need. They're small and it's easy to pack extras.

A small toiletry kit is next on the list. While these items might not be lifesaving, they can certainly be dignity-preserving.

- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Deodorant
- Hairbrush

If you don't have a Dopp bag or similar container, a large zip-close plastic bag would work just fine.

Women should add their preferred feminine hygiene products. If babies are in the mix, a good supply of diapers, wipes and such might be added to augment whatever is normally kept in the omnipresent diaper bag.

Extra cash is always wise. Strive to keep enough money on hand and immediately available to buy at least one full tank of gas, one or two nights in a decent motel, and meals on the road for a few days. You don't need to keep the cash in your kit at all times. Just make sure it's somewhere secure but instantly accessible if needed. In an emergency, use credit cards whenever possible and reserve the cash for when it's truly needed.

All of this gives you a solid base for your evacuation kit.

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

Pick up a good-quality thumb drive and password-protect it. On this drive, you're going to store information that may prove useful in the wake of a major disaster. There can be a significant time investment here, so don't put it off.

- Video inventory of home and vehicles
- Scanned copies of especially treasured family photos
- Insurance policies (home, auto, health, life)
- Copies of identification

You could also include scanned documents that prove ownership of your home and vehicles, such as deeds and titles.

MEDICAL

A small but good-quality first-aid kit is wise. Bumps, bruises, cuts, scrapes and such are common when dealing with disasters. Include over-the-counter remedies for cold/flu, fever, pain and stomach ailments. If you have anyone in the family who is on prescription medication, make sure you have an emergency supply available.

PETS

Plan ahead for taking care of your critters when you evacuate. Include in the kit a supply of food and water as well as collapsible dishes. Leashes and harnesses are also important, no matter how well behaved your animals may be. Protective booties for dogs are a good idea, as the terrain may be rough and there could be broken glass and other debris. However, it can take time to train the dog to walk in them. A full copy of their health record from the veterinarian, one that shows all of the animal's immunizations, may be required for entry into some emergency shelters, should that become necessary.

SLEEP AIDS

In most cases, you're not going to be running off to the forest in some sort of *Red Dawn* scenario. Instead, you'll likely end up at a motel or perhaps the home of a friend or family member. With that in mind, you might consider adding ear plugs and an eye mask to your kit. These may help you get some much-needed quality sleep in an unfamiliar environment.

Use a backpack or similar sort of conveyance for your kit, so you don't need to rely on hard-to-carry cardboard boxes.

Have a plan for how you'll evacuate with your pets, and how you'll care for them away from home.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

One of the most memorable visuals from 9/11 is how the clouds of smoke and dust covered everyone who was fleeing the area. With that in mind, eye protection and masks are a wise addition to the evacuation kit. For the former, swim goggles are probably sufficient, though you're welcome to invest in something a little more robust. The idea here, though, is simply to mitigate the problems associated with smoke from wildfires or resulting from terrorist attacks.

COMMUNICATION

By definition, you can't make informed decisions without information. That's where communication comes into play. Power banks and charger cords and plugs will keep your phone and other devices running. Use wall plugs whenever they're available and save the power banks for when you don't have other options. A small crank-powered radio might prove useful if you're not able to get online. The goal is to be able to keep on top of official updates and announcements.

FOOD AND WATER

Pick up a good-quality water filter, such as one from Sawyer or GRAYL, and keep it in your kit. Make sure you practice with it so you know how it works. A couple of water bottles would also be good additions. For food, you don't need to pack a ton—just a few shelf-stable snacks to help stave off the missed-meal cramps until you get to where you're going.

TOOLS

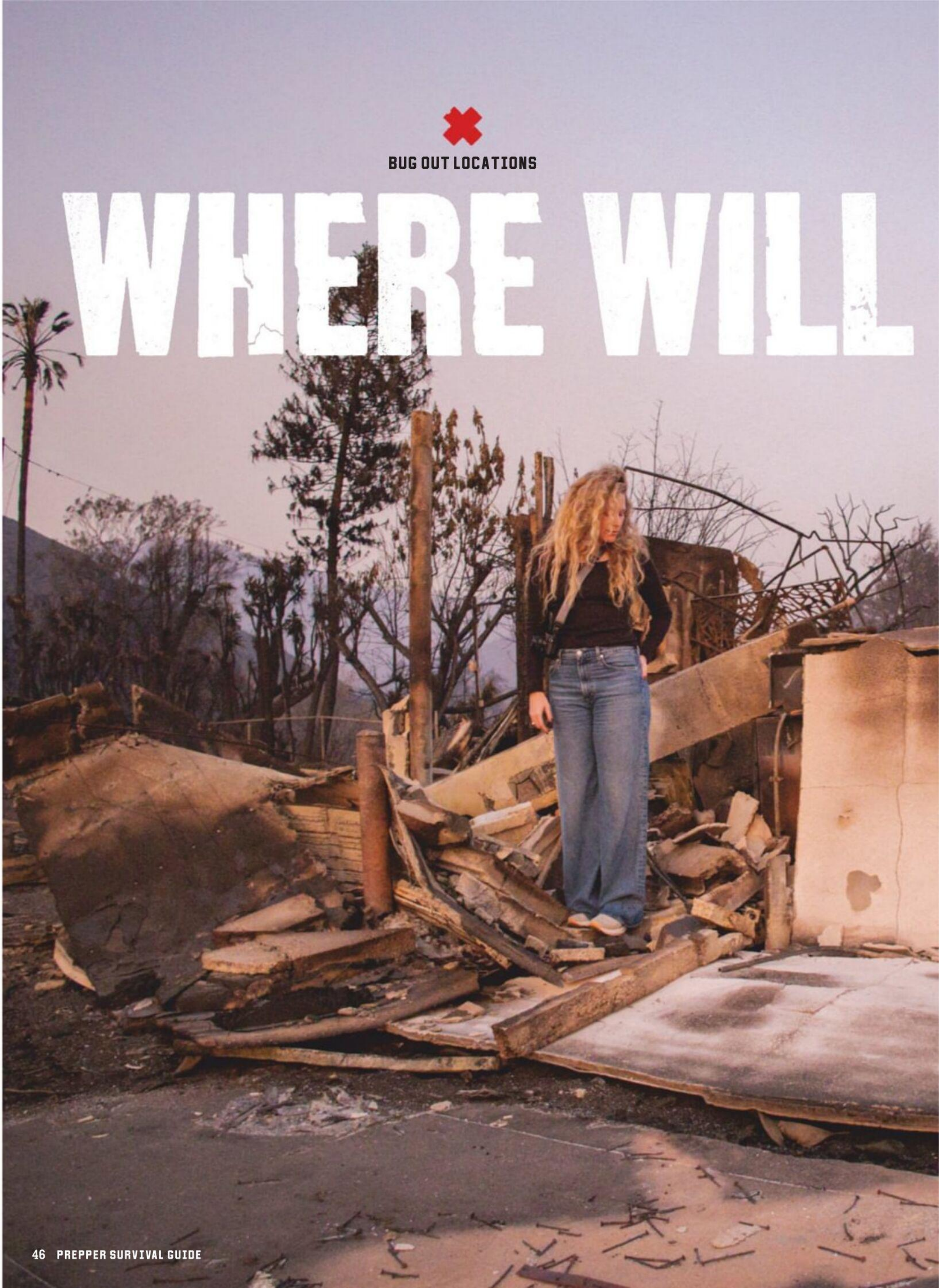
A good knife and flashlight, perhaps a multitool as well, are often among our routine everyday carry (EDC) items. But tossing spares into your evacuation kit isn't a bad idea, just in case you're not able to grab your EDC items before you flee the home.

Consider making one kit for each family member, tailoring them to suit their individual needs as well as physical capabilities. While hopefully you'll be using a vehicle to evacuate, there's a chance you could end up on foot for part of your journey. Therefore, the kits should be in backpacks or other easy-to-carry conveyances. If need be, a collapsible cart or wagon might prove useful. Avoid wheeled suitcases, though, as they don't work very well if you leave paved surfaces.

A good multitool can be quite handy.

BUG OUT LOCATIONS

WHERE WILL



YOU GO?

CHOOSING YOUR EVACUATION DESTINATION

BY JIM COBB

WHEN THE DECISION IS MADE TO HIT THE ROAD, THE GOAL IS TO GET FROM POINT A TO POINT B AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. THAT'S ONLY GOING TO HAPPEN IF YOU KNOW FOR SURE WHERE THOSE TWO POINTS ARE LOCATED.

FEW OF US CAN AFFORD to purchase real estate to stock and maintain for emergency use. Even if its role as a bug out location is secondary to simply being vacation property, that's just simply out of reach for most people. As a result, we need to look at more practical solutions for choosing where we'll go when home is no longer a safe option.

DISTANCE MATTERS

As you go through the planning process, keep the travel distance reasonable. What's reasonable? My suggestion is within how far you can get with a half-tank of fuel in your vehicle. For most people, that's likely around 175 miles or so. The goal, of course, is to get to where you're going without needing to stop for gas. That said, keep in mind that it's fairly probable that you won't be moving in a straight line. Odds are good that you'll end up detouring around one or more obstacles, such as traffic jams or storm debris, which will cut down the actual distance away from home that you'll be able to travel.

CAR CAMPING

This one isn't ideal in most situations, but it's still worth considering in a pinch. If you have a vehicle spacious enough, camping in your vehicle can work, at least for short periods of time. Don't get me wrong, some people have made it their whole lifestyle—just search out van life online for more information about it. One of the biggest obstacles is finding places where you can park overnight without being hassled. Some big-box retailers allow overnight parking, so that might be an option. Some campgrounds allow car camping as well, so even if you don't have a tent that could be worth pursuing.

PLAN MULTIPLE LOCATIONS

It's a wise idea not to put all of your eggs in one basket, so to speak. Plan three distinct potential bug out locations. These should be in different directions from your home, such as one to the north, one to the southwest, and one that's due east. Given that we don't know ahead of time what will cause us to evacuate, we don't want to be in a position where we would have to travel straight through the wildfire or whatever to reach our destination. Planning a few different locations gives us options.

FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Talk to friends and family who live far enough away that whatever would cause you to evacuate isn't likely to affect them, but who are still within a reasonable distance. It's wise to have the conversation now, rather than waiting until the heat of the moment. Ask if it would be OK for you and your family to shack up with them temporarily in the event of a disaster. Be sure to offer to reciprocate if the roles are

Campgrounds may fill up quickly, so if that's where you're headed get there ASAP or you might find them booked solid.

reversed. Depending on the closeness of the relationship you have with them, and how well you trust them, you could go so far as to ask about storing a small tote of clothes and supplies in their garage or something. I wouldn't go overboard with this, just a couple of changes of clothes, that sort of thing.

MOTELS

I recommend these as a secondary option, simply because people probably won't be lining up to stay at your Uncle Brad's house like they will at a Motel 6 or Super 8. Chain motels could fill up quickly. What you might want to do is research a few motels in neighboring counties or that are otherwise within that reasonable driving distance. Select ones that are clean and that you'd feel comfortable staying at for a night or two. Save their phone numbers in your phone's contact list, so you don't need to search them out online under pressure. These should be their local numbers, not the generic 800 number for the reservation line. If you call, you're going to want to speak with the human being actually working the front desk. They're in a better position to tell you if they have a room available that you can reserve. They can also give you a heads-up on what to expect in that area when you arrive, such as traffic congestion and the like. Information from boots on the ground is always welcome.

It's probably common knowledge that not all motels allow pets. If you'll have a dog or cat with you when you evacuate, you should plan ahead now and make sure the motels you are considering allow them. That said, have a backup plan. Locally, a condominium building caught fire in late 2024. About 16 families were displaced. One of them, an older couple, called a local motel while firefighters were still battling the blaze. As they were making a reservation, they confirmed that the motel allowed pets, as they had a small dog.

However, when they arrived at the front desk at about 1:00 a.m., they were told they couldn't have the dog in their room. Adding insult to injury, they were still charged for the room because it was now past the cutoff time to cancel the reservation. They ended up having to scramble around to find somewhere else to stay for the night.

Community shelters are typically a last-resort option. They'll do in a pinch, but strive to do better with your planning.

With that story in mind, it might be best to make arrangements to stay with people you know—at least for the first night, so you can catch your breath and plan your next move.

CAMPGROUNDS

This is definitely an option worth considering, especially if you enjoy camping and you have your gear available to you. Campgrounds are far cheaper than most motels. Many have plenty of amenities like showers and swimming pools. Fun things to do can help take the edge off particularly for children. As with motels, it pays to do your homework well in advance. Have the required phone numbers stored in your phone. Be aware that campgrounds, particularly those in state parks, can fill up very quickly in the wake of a major disaster. It pays to get there early.

Most motels will require a credit card to make a reservation as well as to book a room. Even during a crisis, they may not be able to override that requirement in their system. If at all possible, keep a credit card with your evacuation kit.

ROUTE PLANNING

THE GETAWAY PLAN

KNOW HOW YOU'RE GETTING THERE

BY ERIK WINCHESTER

WHEN IT COMES TIME TO HEAD OUT OF TOWN, THE LAST THING YOU WANT IS TO GET CAUGHT ON AN INTERSTATE THAT'S TURNED INTO A SLOWLY MOVING PARKING LOT. THE BEST BUG OUT LOCATION ON THE PLANET IS WORTHLESS IF YOU CAN'T GET THERE.

WITH THAT IN MIND, route planning is a vital component of your overall evacuation plan. In some ways, this is the most difficult variable in the equation. There are so many reasons why things could go sideways once you hit the road. You can't account for every potential eventuality, but you can mitigate the risks of the most common issues.

TRAFFIC

Use the mapping app or website of your choice, or grab an old-fashioned paper street map, and examine all the different ways you can get from point A (your home) to point B (your bug out location). While interstate highways would probably the quickest way to get there under normal conditions, a disaster is far from normal. Many people will head to the freeways out of habit if nothing else. The result is massive gridlock. It's made worse by not being able to get out of the jam easily, what with exits being so far apart even if you're able to nudge your way to the correct lane.

A better option is to stick to less-

Getting stuck on a major highway that's packed bumper to bumper should be avoided at all costs.

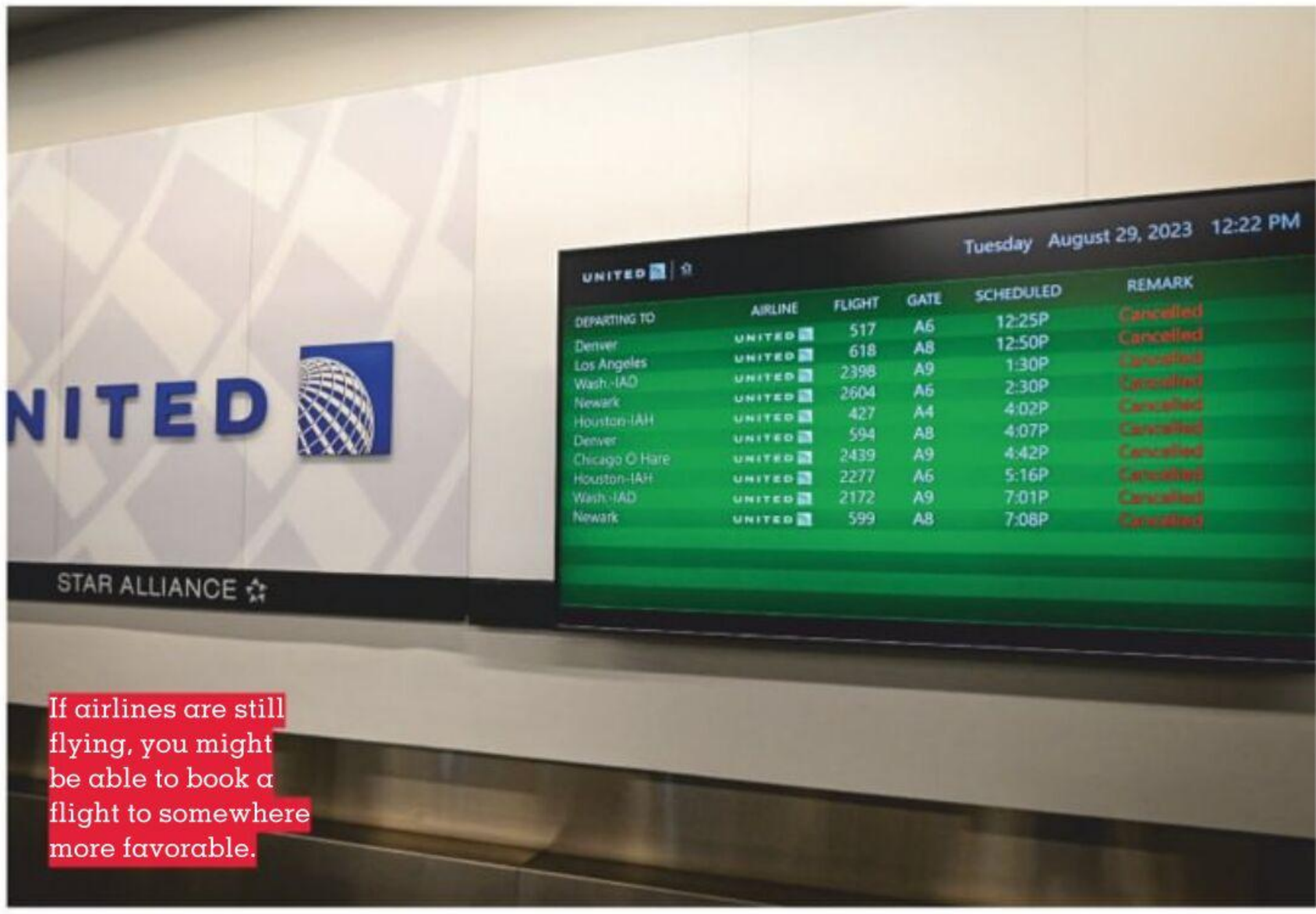
If you don't have a vehicle to use, you may have to rely on the kindness of others to get you out of town.

traveled roads. Look for two-lane highways and the like. While they might also be busy, you might have other routes that become available along the way. An even better approach is to become intimately familiar with the highways and byways that lie between you and your destination. Spend time exploring those areas well ahead of any sort of emergency. Road-tripping can be a fun diversion on lazy weekends. Get to know the back roads that typically only locals use. See where those little lanes lead.

As you look at different routes, watch out for bottlenecks. A simple example would be a bridge or tunnel that's not wide enough for two lanes. Plan ways around those bottlenecks so you don't get stuck in the inevitable traffic that will build up.

Not all potential routes are paved with blacktop. Get creative with your evacuation contingency plans. Here's an example. In my area, there are a couple of nature trails made from converted railbeds. Years ago, the railroad was dismantled and the routes turned into walking and biking trails. They're covered in crushed limestone and are usually higher than the surrounding terrain, so flooding isn't as much of a risk. The trails are mostly flat and straight.

While vehicles aren't allowed on these trails, in an emergency they could be an evacuation option. Given that the trail is more than 15 miles long and connects with a couple of different towns, they could provide a quick and easy backdoor escape route.


UNITED
STAR ALLIANCE
Tuesday August 29, 2023 12:22 PM
DEPARTING TO AIRLINE FLIGHT GATE SCHEDULED REMARK
Denver UNITED 517 A6 12:25P Cancelled
Los Angeles UNITED 618 A8 12:50P Cancelled
Wash.-IAD UNITED 2398 A9 1:30P Cancelled
Newark UNITED 2604 A6 2:30P Cancelled
Houston-IAH UNITED 427 A4 4:02P Cancelled
Denver UNITED 594 A8 4:07P Cancelled
Chicago O Hare UNITED 2439 A9 4:42P Cancelled
Houston-IAH UNITED 2277 A6 5:16P Cancelled
Wash.-IAD UNITED 2172 A9 7:01P Cancelled
Newark UNITED 599 A8 7:08P Cancelled
If airlines are still flying, you might be able to book a flight to somewhere more favorable.

ROADBLOCKS

Depending on the nature of the disaster, authorities may set up roadblocks. These are often used to direct evacuation traffic along a specific route. Arguing with the folks manning these roadblocks is going to be a futile effort, wasting everyone's time and increasing the stress in an already tense situation.

Instead, plan ahead so you know where you can go to avoid these roadblocks. Start by consulting your county's emergency response plans. Contact the emergency management coordinator or equivalent for your city or county. If you can't find the contact information for that person or department, call the non-emergency number for your local police department. They should be able to point you in the right direction.

Once you know who to

GET TO KNOW ALL OF THE HIGHWAYS, BYWAYS AND DIRT ROADS THAT LEAD OUT OF TOWN.

contact, what you want is a copy of the disaster response plan applicable for your area. This should be publicly available. If it isn't posted online, there might be copy or printer fees. That's normal and yes, they can sometimes be pricey. But these plans should tell you where they plan to funnel traffic in the event of a crisis, including where they will set up roadblocks or blockades. Using that information, you can plan your own routes around them and hopefully not get caught up in the traffic snarls that are sure to occur.

It cannot be stressed enough, though, that you don't want to run afoul of law enforcement agencies that are largely trying to help, even if it doesn't seem like they are. Ending up detained because they decided that was easier than continuing to debate with you isn't going to end well for you and your family. Even if you were in the right, the time it will take to get to that vindication point could prove tragic. As the saying goes, sometimes discretion is the better part of valor.

If you'll be traveling with pets, make sure you account for them in the vehicle.

Bugging out on foot is feasible for many, but it's not ideal in most cases. You'll be exposed to the elements and you may have to spend one or more nights out there before you get to your destination.

TRANSPORTATION

How you plan to travel is an important consideration for route planning. Our discussion here has been focused on bugging out in a car or truck, but there are other options that could be available to you. Something to keep in mind with these alternative transport ideas is that they all leave you exposed to the elements. This could be less than ideal, but the trade-off might be worth it to you.

Dirt bikes and ATVs can navigate terrain that street vehicles can't. You can't carry as much with them as you can with a car or pickup truck, but the mobility might be more important to you. A vehicle like this can open up additional route possibilities.

Bicycles are even more limited when it comes to carrying capacity, but you also don't need to worry about fuel. They're also much quieter than anything with a motor, if stealth is a concern. If you want to explore this option, start hitting the trails now to condition yourself. While remembering how to ride a bike doesn't take long,

learning or relearning how to do so in rough terrain is a whole different beast.

That brings us to shank's mare—just putting one foot in front of the other. In many ways, this is the most adaptable solution, as you're only limited by your physical capabilities. But by the same token, those limitations may be severely restricting. Sure, once upon a time you could carry a heavy pack for 30 miles or more at a stretch. That may have been 30 years and 60 pounds ago. If you struggle to get to your mailbox and back, then bugging out on foot probably isn't going to be a wise decision. We all have limitations, health and otherwise. The smart move is to find ways to work around them.

Whenever possible, plan more than one route to each bug out location. You don't need to be ridiculously elaborate with this, but there's always a chance that the disaster at hand, or responses to it, will close off a route you'd planned. Do what you can to sidestep that issue ahead of time and give yourself multiple options to reach your objective, just in case your normal route isn't available.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Once you've determined an evacuation route, it's important to get out there and travel it on some sort of regular basis. It doesn't need to be weekly, but it should be often enough that you learn the route by heart. Get to know what it looks like in all seasons and at night as well as during the day. Become familiar with landmarks, as they can help you navigate in bad weather or if you're stressed.

Do this with every evacuation route you plan; that way, when the time comes, there's no confusion about which way to turn along the way.

About the Author *Erik Winchester spent close to two decades working in the security and investigation fields before retiring and becoming a freelance writer and consultant. He contributes regularly to* Prepper Survival Guide *and* Backwoods Survival Guide *magazines*

[SECTION / 03]

SHELTERING IN PLACE

HUNKERING DOWN AT HOME IS OFTEN YOUR BEST BET IN MOST SITUATIONS, BUT YOU NEED TO BE PREPARED TO DO SO.

Boarding up windows is a good way to protect them in the face of hurricanes or other extreme weather.

SHELTER IN PLACE

ARE YOU PREPARE YOUR HOME PROPERLY READY?

BY DANA BENNER

Sometimes, bugging out just isn't going to be a feasible option.

IF A DISASTER HITS, YOU WILL HAVE TO MAKE A CHOICE TO LEAVE OR STAY. IN A SPLIT SECOND, CAN YOU MAKE THAT DECISION? MORE IMPORTANTLY, IS YOUR HOME SET UP SO THAT YOU TRULY HAVE THAT CHOICE TO MAKE?

WRITERS, INCLUDING myself, are always penning articles about bugging out. But let's face it, not all situations will require you to evacuate. Then, there are those instances when you can't leave, even if you wanted to do so. You can't rely on the government to be there, and you can't rely upon someone to come rescue you. You will need to rely upon how well you prepared your home to see you through.

STAY OR GO?

Before I go any further, I need to say that I am by no means suggesting that you must stay in your home no matter what happens. Each situation is different, just as each person is different. Remember, survival is all about staying alive, so don't put yourself, or others, in harm's way. Use your head. If you are not comfortable about your ability to ride it out, then evacuate. If authorities tell you to leave, follow their orders. If rising waters or the flames of a forest fire are closing in, get out.

When would be a good time to hunker down? Basically, when staying is safer and it makes more sense than leaving. Sometimes, such as in the case of severe thunderstorms or ice storms, where the event itself causes dangerous travel

situations, you are better off staying put. I prefer to stay in place when something happens, only leaving if I absolutely have to go. Why? Because my home is where my supplies are located. I feel more comfortable and relaxed in my home, and feeling this way allows me to think through the situation, whatever it may be. Knowing my home is as ready as it can be goes a long way.

Mother Nature is fickle and has a tendency to cause problems every now and again.

Surviving a crisis like a weather emergency is rarely about monumental, heroic efforts. Instead, it is about taking simple precautions to keep your family fed and safe during a crisis.

PREPARE YOUR HOME

Start by making two lists. The first list consists of the large jobs that need to be done, like roof, windows and anything structural. In my neck of the woods, where ice and snowstorms are the norm, a metal roof may be something to consider. If you live in a flood-prone area, it could also include deciding if you want to raise your home and put it on stilts. The second list should be of smaller jobs, which can be anything from securing sandbags (just in case) to making sure you have properly working smoke and CO2 detectors and fire extinguishers.

With each list, figure out which items are the most important. I like to use a rating system of 1 to 10, with 1 being the most important and 10 being the least important. Anything involving home structure should be rated as a top priority. The same goes with food and water.

Once you have done that, decide whether the work is something you can do, or if you need to have professionals do it. I can handle some work, but major structural, electrical and plumbing work I leave to the professionals. Doing a job wrong can be just as bad as not doing it in the first place.

Every home should have a generator and extra fuel for it.

HAVE A BACKUP

Whether it is for cooking, heating, communications, food, water or a host of other things, it is very important to have backup plans. Things will break and resources will run out. Remember, if you stay in your home you will need to be prepared for the long haul. The

items you will need will be those that do not require electrical power (unless it is in the form of rechargeable batteries), gasoline, propane or anything else we consider vital in our modern world. I am talking about hand tools, cooking over an open fire or charcoal, and walking or riding a bike to get from point A to point B.

TOOLS

Even in the worst of times, or perhaps because of them, things will need to be repaired. It is a very good idea to have a variety of hand tools available. Whether it is fixing broken pipes or a leaking roof, or chopping wood to heat your home, you will need tools. You have to remember that you probably will not have power. Battery-operated tools are great, as long as you have a means to recharge them. A variety of saws, wrenches, screwdrivers, axes and hammers should be on hand.

IN THE KITCHEN

If the power goes out for any amount of time, you will want to eat the perishable food first, but to do that you will need a way to cook it. Standard ovens and stoves, whether they are gas or electric, may not work. That means alternative means will need to be found. Remember, any device that has a flame needs to be operated outdoors. An outdoor fire pit, a biofuel stove or a charcoal grill should always be available.

Other kitchen tools to have are manual can openers, whisks and wooden spoons. You will not be able to operate mixers, blenders or electric can openers if the power is off. Just because you have no power it doesn't mean you can't prepare meals. You'll just have to do it old-school.

FOOD & WATER

Tons of articles have been written about the importance of having a good supply of food and water, but we can never say it enough. Water can be stored in the many food-safe containers that are out there. Plastic bottles that hold juice or soda can be used to store water. While the water is still running, fill as many containers as you can and then store them in a cool, dark location. No matter how many containers you fill ahead of time, there is a good chance you will run out. All water sources should be considered questionable, so they will

Communication is important. A radio, like this one from Midland, and a cellphone should be on hand.

Portable solar panels, like this one from SunJack, are great for keeping batteries, phones and small electronics charged.

Food and water, and a way to secure more, should be part of your plan.

The Solo Stove Titan is a way to heat food and boil water without worrying about fuel.

A multitool can help take care of smaller jobs quickly.

A machete will help you clear brush after a storm and gather wood for heat and cooking. This is the LT Wright Overland.

need to be filtered before drinking. There are many high-quality filters on the market so make sure you have one.

Food should consist of dry goods and canned fruit, meat and vegetables. Most canned and dry food can be eaten just as they are, or with minimal heating. Pick up any of these foods a little at a time, like every time you head to the grocery store. In no time, you will have enough to see you through.

POWER

No matter where you live, you will need power. Many people, including myself, have backup generators, but they are only as good as your fuel supply. Solar is the way to go. My daughter has both solar and a generator. During the day, her solar panels provide the power needed, while at night the generator kicks in. If you don't have the room or the means for full-size solar panels, then go with one of the numerous portable panels available. They will give you enough power to recharge batteries and some electronics.

SAFETY

Never overlook the need for safety. Fire extinguishers are a must, as are carbon monoxide and smoke detectors. It is not enough to just have them; they need to be checked and updated often. Make sure they are available when you need them. While on the subject of safety, I need to mention first-aid kits. Having a good kit, one that is more than a box of bandages, is critical. Accidents will happen, so make sure your home is prepared to handle them.

COMMUNICATIONS

You will need to stay on top of weather alerts and the news. If nothing else you will need a good AM/FM/weather band radio. Ideally, though, you should have something you can use to call out. Cellphones don't always work, so a two-way radio is a good idea. Amateur radio is even better, though it requires you to be licensed.

KEEP YOUR SANITY

Nobody knows how long you will be holed up, so you will need some way to keep your sanity. A few books, a deck of cards or a chess set work well. If you have children with you, make sure you have something to keep them busy.

You can never be prepared for everything. All you can do is your best. In an emergency situation, your home may be the ideal place to ride things out. Make sure that it is up to the job.

About the Author *Dana Benner has been writing about all aspects of the outdoors, survival and self-sufficiency for over 30 years. His work appears in regional and national publications.*

A wood stove can be a great way to provide heat, as long as you have fuel for it.

ESSENTIAL TOOLS

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE THESE ON HAND.

There are many tools that I feel are important to have. These are my top 10 recommendations.

Water Filtration of Some Sort I use a Sawyer Bottle Water Filtration System as one of mine. It is designed to filter up to 100,000 gallons of water.

A Good First-Aid Kit I use the Orion Weekender and have four of them.

Food This is important, but the food needs to be stable without refrigeration. Dried goods like pasta and rice, and freeze-dried food should always be kept on hand.

A Stove A stove or some other means of cooking food and boiling water is good to have. I use the Solo Stove Titan.

A Machete This tool has multiple purposes. I prefer the LT Wright Overland.

Power You need a source to charge your phone, radio and batteries. I use SunTech portable solar panels.

A Transistor Radio The one from Midland allows you to pick up news and weather alerts.

Cellphones They might or might not work, but they can be a valuable tool.

A Multitool or a Small Tool Kit Handy to have for emergency fixes. There are many good ones out there.

Fire Some means to start a fire. The simplest is to have a bunch of butane lighters.

PRIORITIES

THE FIRST 24 HOURS

WHAT COMES FIRST IN THE AFTERMATH?

BY JIM COBB

HOW YOU HANDLE THOSE INITIAL HOURS CAN MEAN SUCCESS OR FAILURE. THERE ARE SEVERAL OBJECTIVES THAT MUST BE MET FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY TO NOT JUST SURVIVE, BUT THRIVE. THE ORDER IN WHICH YOU TACKLE THESE AREAS WILL BE AT LEAST SOMEWHAT CONTINGENT UPON THE SITUATION YOU FIND YOURSELF FACING. BUT IT'S ONLY AFTER THE SAFETY OF YOU AND YOUR FAMILY IS ASSURED SHOULD YOU LOOK TOWARD COMPLETING ANY SORT OF TO-DO LIST.

GATHER INFORMATION

By definition, you can only make an informed decision if you have information to act upon. Use every resource available, including radio (AM/FM and shortwave), TV and the internet. The NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) broadcasts, often just referred to as "weather radio," may be used to transmit official emergency announcements. The National Weather Radio service partners with the Emergency Alert System

Stay up to date on events in your area—which includes knowing if curfews are in place, so you don't end up in trouble with the authorities.

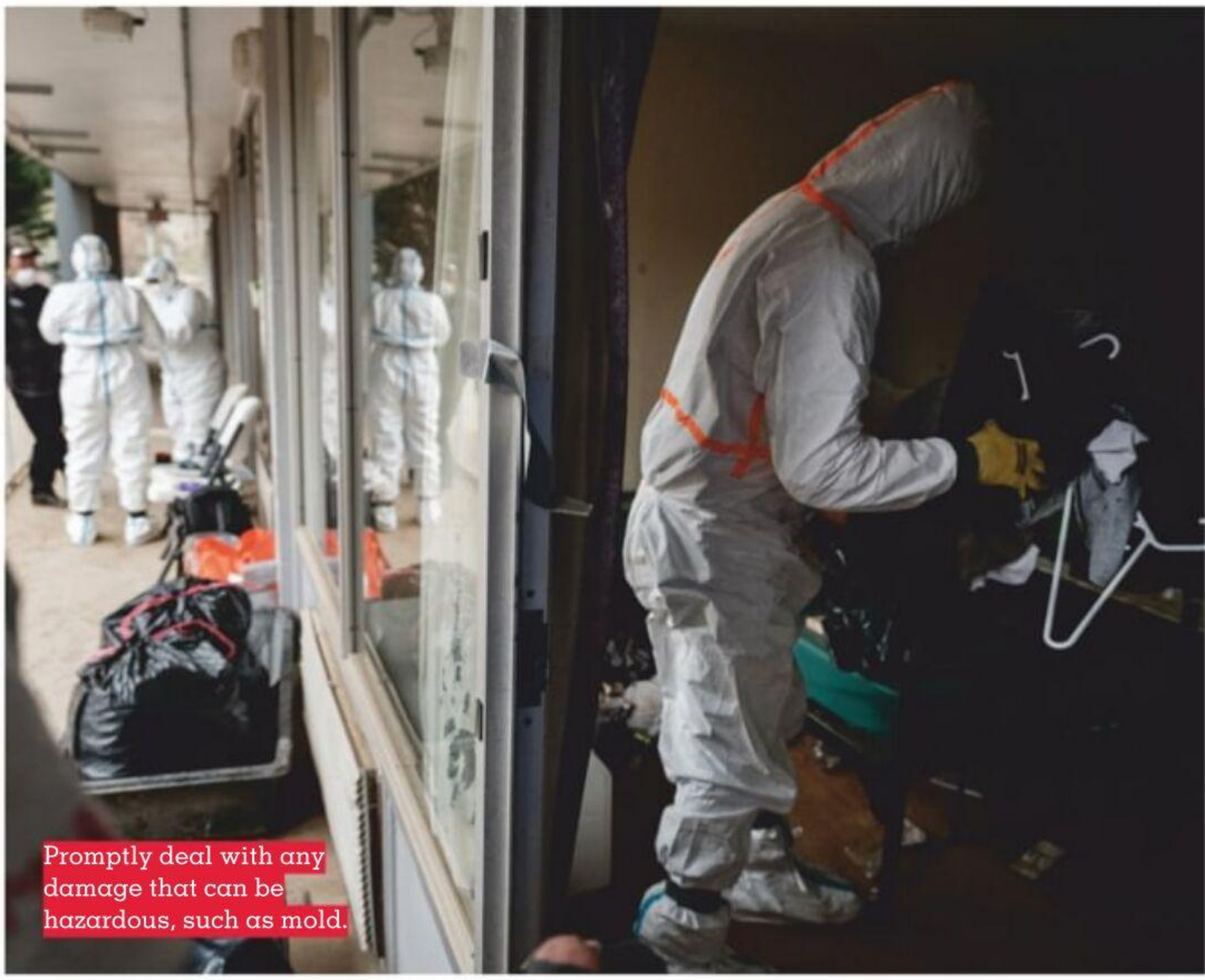
to broadcast information that is critical in a crisis. For this reason, one of your first investments (before a crisis hits) should be a weather radio.

Look into amateur (ham) radio as well. The licensing process isn't difficult and the benefits are tremendous. Ham operators are often the backbone of emergency communication in a disaster. On top of that, most operators will do everything they can to help someone who is genuinely interested in obtaining a license. Most counties have a ham operator club of some sort, which is a great place to start.

Bear in mind that news outlets often get as much information wrong as they do correct in the initial stages of a disaster. They are all in a rush to be the first to announce the smallest bit of news—and in their haste sometimes make decisions to run stories without properly vetting them. At times, rumors get reported as fact and stories can snowball from there. Social media can be even worse. However, social media can be beneficial by connecting survivors and allowing eyewitnesses to share information.

Consult a variety of sources, if possible, and cobble together the facts presented in order to get a true picture of what has happened. Use that information to determine your best course of action.

While you're at it, do what you can to let others know about your individual situation. Utilize telephone, texting and social media so people know if you're safe or if you need assistance. One helpful app is Zello, which allows your smartphone to be used somewhat like a walkie-talkie. It works well—but bear in mind that it requires an internet signal to operate.



Promptly deal with any damage that can be hazardous, such as mold.

ASSESS RESOURCES

Just as you take stock of the crisis and gather information about what's going on around you, you need to assess your individual situation. Determine what resources you have available to you and whether there are any gaping holes that could hinder survival.

Is your home safe or has it been damaged in the disaster? How much food and water do you have on hand? If any family members take prescription medications, how long will the current supply last?

While some of that seems like it would be information you should know ahead of time, bear in mind that we cannot accurately predict the nature of the disaster that might be coming someday. It is not unheard of for a truly well-stocked prepper to lose most or all of their supplies due to flooding, for example, or another type of damage directly related to the crisis at hand.

DEAL WITH PERISHABLES

Assuming the grid is down, the food in the refrigerator

If you have a large amount of food that isn't going to remain viable, cook and consume as much of it as you can. Invite neighbors over for a cookout. Let the food do some good rather than allowing it to spoil.

and freezer isn't going to last. A full refrigerator will stay cold for about four hours, then it will slowly begin to warm. A full freezer will keep food frozen for about two days before it starts to thaw. If the freezer is half full, figure 24 hours or so. Of course, the more often you open the door to the fridge or freezer, the more warm air that will be introduced to the interior.

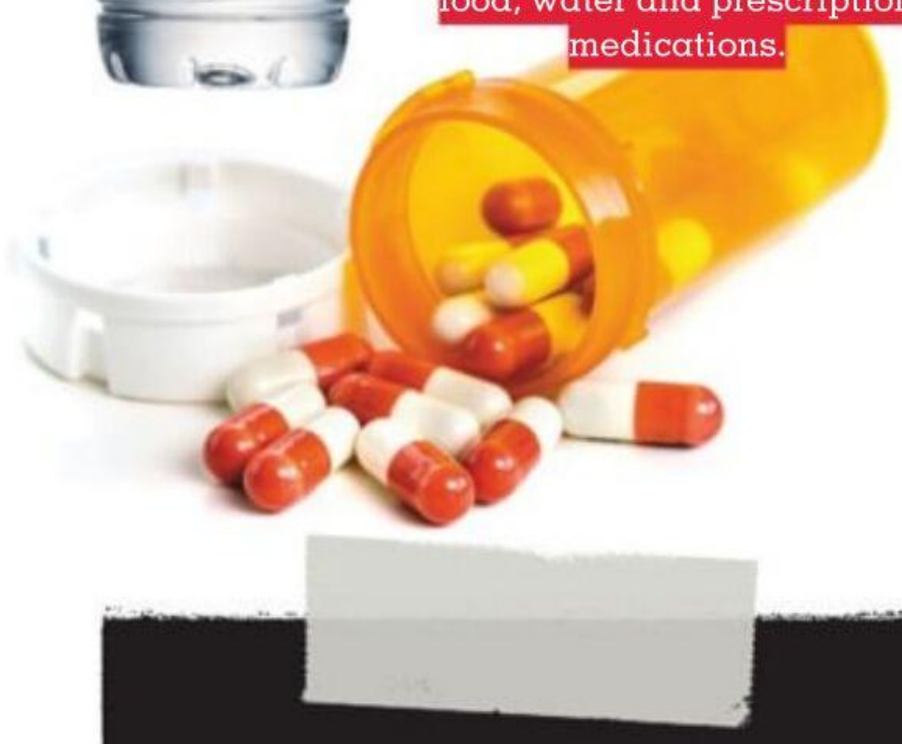
If your freezer isn't usually full, it is a good practice to fill 2-liter bottles with water and put them in the freezer. A full freezer doesn't have to work as hard, so this will use less energy. Plus, the bottles will help food stay frozen longer during a power outage. On top of that, the bottles are a source of clean water in an emergency. When filling the bottles, leave a couple of inches of headspace to allow for expansion as the water freezes.

Keep in mind, too, that food doesn't go from good to bad in an instant. You have a little time to decide what to do with the perishables. There are a couple of options to consider.

If you have the means to preserve food, such as pressure canning or dehydrating, get to work. Put as much of it up as you can so it doesn't go to waste. This will also augment whatever shelf-stable foods you already have stockpiled.

The other approach is to consume as much of it as possible before it goes bad. Drink the milk and eat the yogurt. Warm up the leftovers from last night's dinner and have them for breakfast or lunch. Cook up the hamburger meat or steaks. Invite the neighbors over if you have enough to share. It is far better for that food to go into someone's belly than the trash.

Take a little time to figure out what necessities you have on hand—including food, water and prescription medications.



CHECK ON NEIGHBORS

Once our families are safe and secure, we should reach out to those in our immediate area to make sure they are OK as well. This is even more important if we have neighbors who are elderly, infirm or otherwise unable to get around as well as perhaps they once did. If they are injured, provide whatever first aid you can and call for medical assistance. Make sure their home is safe to occupy. If it isn't, help them find a place to stay, whether that's with you or someplace else. Help them get in touch with family, whether through the phone or via social media. Do what you can to make sure their basic needs are being met, including staying warm or cool as the weather warrants. Remember, we are all in this together.

DOCUMENTATION

Once everyone is safe, fed, warm and dry, start documenting what happened. Photograph and video any damage to the home or possessions. Take photos from multiple angles, and when shooting video, it's a good idea to narrate what the viewer is seeing. Upload those files to some sort of cloud storage right away, just in case your phone is later lost or damaged. One easy way to do this is to simply email the files to an email account you can access remotely.

Notify your insurance agent as soon as is feasible. You might be able to get the claim process started online, if you still have access to the internet. Either way, it's wise to have the phone number for reporting an insurance claim saved in your contact list on your phone.

CLEAN UP

As soon as is practical, begin the cleanup process. While you might not be able to deal with everything—not initially—do what you can to put things back in order. In some cases, there might not be a whole lot that needs to be straightened up. But in the aftermath of severe storms and such, there may well be downed branches or trees or debris strewn about. These can be safety hazards, so the sooner they are dealt with, the better. Be very careful, though, about possible downed power lines and avoid dangerous areas.

Salvage what you can—but in some cases, you'll be forced to toss out much of your belongings.

STORAGE

SMALL-SPACE

When you don't have much room for your stuff, keeping it neat and organized is even more important.

IF YOU LIVE IN A COMPACT SPACE, YOU MAY FEEL AT A DISADVANTAGE WHEN YOU START PREPPING BECAUSE YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH ROOM FOR EVERYTHING YOU NEED. BUT WHILE IT MAY BE CHALLENGING, IT'S NOT IMPOSSIBLE. YOU JUST NEED TO TAKE A FEW EXTRA STEPS AND BE CREATIVE WITH THE SPACE AVAILABLE.

PREPPING

YOU DON'T NEED A HOMESTEAD TO GET READY FOR EMERGENCIES

BY BERNIE CARR

Those who live in apartments and condos are often faced with limited options when it comes to stockpiling resources. You can only fit so much into a given space. However, if you get creative you can often find room.

DECLUTTER

According to *Psychology Today*, clutter can affect your ability to move and your ability to think. It can be a fire hazard as well, according to the National Fire Protection Association. Clutter can also affect your ability to prep. If your space is occupied by clutter, you won't have the room to store vital supplies. The first step you should take is to look at your space and get rid of possessions that no longer serve you. Excluding seasonal items, do you have sports equipment, musical instruments, clothes or shoes that you haven't used in a year or two and are just taking up space? Sell or donate them. You'll free up some room for your preps.

USE YOUR WHOLE HOUSE

Overcome any inclinations to store items only where they're "supposed" to belong. Food and water need not be stored in the kitchen. Stash them wherever you can find room. Your first-aid kit doesn't necessarily have to be in the bathroom. Look at each space in your home with fresh eyes to spot any possible storage zones.

BE DECORATIVE

While we're inclined to hide our supplies, and for good reason, it's also possible to use them decoratively and no one would be the wiser. My daughter displays her candle collection all over her apartment, but they also double as emergency lighting if the power goes out. Store rice, beans, nuts and dried fruit in matching Mason jars on a rustic shelf as part of a country-style decor.

Supplement your houseplants with pretty herbs such as mint, rosemary, lavender and aloe vera. They have medicinal properties and are attractive at the same time.

Shelving and plastic totes can be used in the basement, garage or even a spare room.

STORING WATER

A person can live just three days without water, so it's a top priority for emergency needs. Store at least a gallon per person in your household per day for drinking and washing. Don't forget to include your pets. An inexpensive and compact way to store water is to fill up cleaned 2-liter soda bottles with tap water and cap tightly. Store the bottles horizontally on a shelf.

If you have an empty corner, use stackable water storage containers against the wall. Another great option is to fill up any available space in your freezer with containers full of water (leave space in them for expansion when they freeze). The extra ice will also help your freezer stay cold longer in the event of a power outage.

In case of an impending natural disaster such as a hurricane, line your bathtub with a plastic sheet and fill it up with water.

To compensate for the lack of water storage space,

Come up with a storage system that works for you and your family, then stick with it.

many urban preppers keep water purification tablets or a water filtration system as a backup way to purify water in case tap water becomes contaminated. Make sure the water filter you choose removes viruses, bacteria, pesticides and other harmful pollutants.

SPACE SAVERS

The type of storage container you choose makes a big difference in saving space. It may be more economical to use whatever box you can find, but if you're short on space, invest in stackable, matching containers to maximize your capacity.

If you live in an condo or apartment and have frequent inspections or maintenance visits, choose opaque bins for privacy.

Five-gallon buckets work well for storing everything from food staples, hygiene and personal care products to pet food and first-aid supplies. They stack and can be stored in the corner of a room or closet. With good seals, they also protect the contents from pests. Most 5-gallon buckets have handles so they can be easily transported.

Space-saving vacuum storage and compression bags are great for holding extra clothing, blankets, comforters and sleeping bags. You can also

LABEL EVERY BOX, TOTE AND OTHER CONTAINER YOU STORE, IN ORDER TO MAKE IT EASIER TO FIND WHAT YOU NEED.

repurpose storage products such as shoe organizers for preparedness supplies.

GO UPWARD

Vertical space is often wasted since many people overlook the fact that they have space above eye level. Add shelving over the toilet, over the washer and dryer, or above your clothes in the closet.

If you live in a flood area, it's even more imperative that you store food, water, power outage kit, first aid and other disaster supplies above ground level.

FURNITURE FIXES

Choose pieces of furniture that provide hidden storage, such as an ottoman or coffee table. You can also use your existing furniture for repurposed storage. An entertainment center can house food and water instead of DVDs or electronics. Store books in a bookcase close to the shelf edge, but leave spaces behind them for storing small items. A metal filing cabinet may look like you have files hanging within, but use it for stowing your preps instead.

Use your oven, broiler or microwave as storage for extra pots and pans. Just don't forget to take them out before turning on the heat.

Cover your dining table with a large tablecloth and use the area underneath for extra storage.

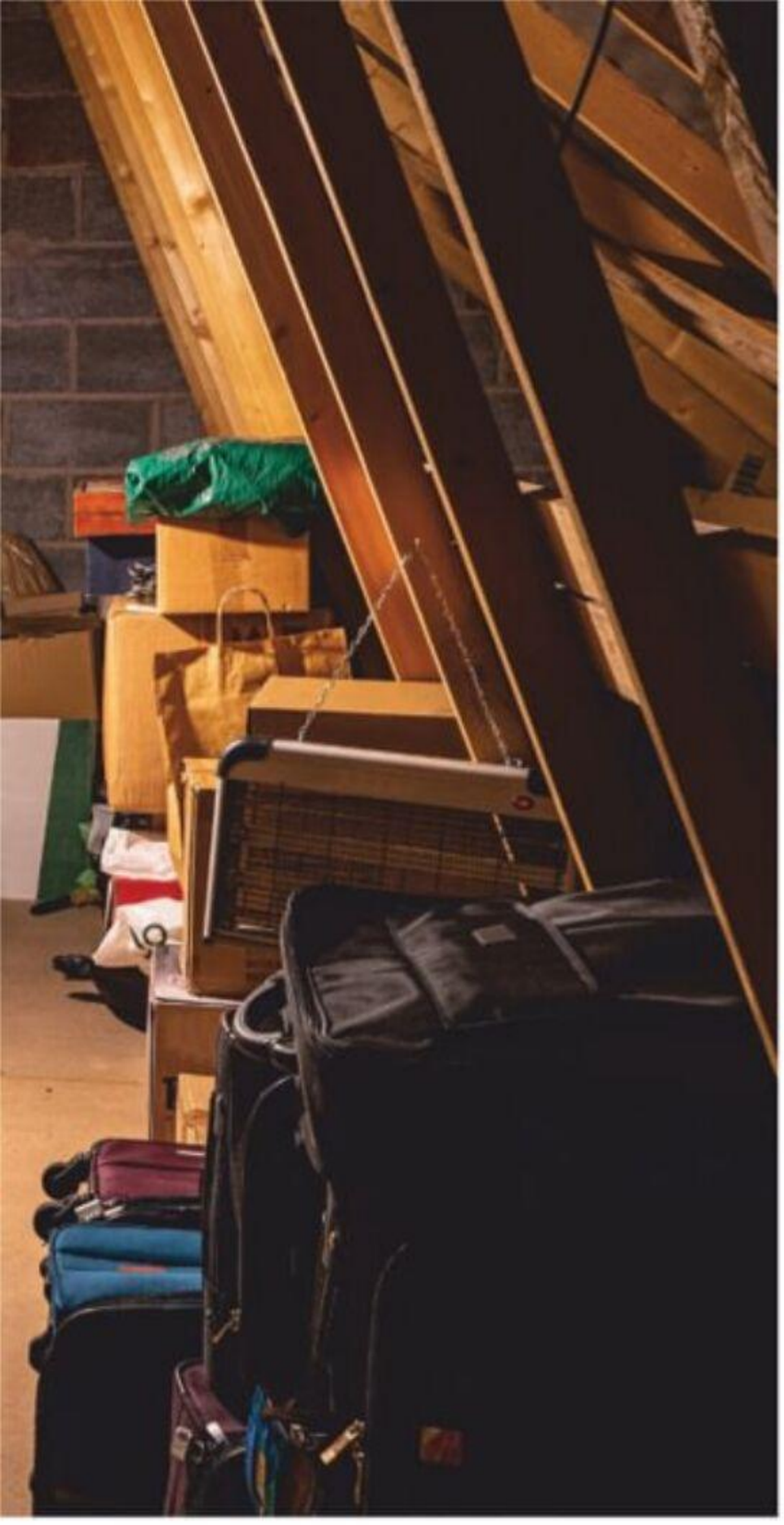
The space under your bed can be valuable for storing items. Use an under-the-bed shoe organizer for disaster supplies. Or you can use a piece of plywood that you can pull out for items such as canned goods, toiletries, pet food, toilet paper and other essentials. If you'd like even more space under the bed, remove the box springs and build a bed frame with space underneath for storage. You can even replace the bedsprings with enough 5-gallon buckets to support your mattress. Cover your entire bed with a nice bed skirt to hide the supplies underneath and no one will be the wiser.

NESTING ITEMS

Don't overlook spaces within containers. Store off-season clothes inside luggage that can be nested

Attics are good places to store things that aren't going to be affected by temperature extremes.

CONSIDER KEEPING SOME SORT OF INVENTORY SO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE ON HAND.



within an even larger piece of luggage.

Use the space within large pots and pans to store first-aid supplies, personal care products and other small items.

STORAGE UNITS

When you have absolutely no extra space for your stuff, consider a small storage unit. You may be able to rent one in your apartment or condominium building, or you can find a facility nearby. Make sure the facility is easily accessible to you in case you have to walk in an emergency. Look for units that are temperature- and humidity-controlled if you will be storing food or medicines. The building should be clean and free of pests and in a safe neighborhood. Much like researching potential areas before moving in, check out the storage facility's surroundings, foot traffic and security measures. Read the rental agreement to determine what you can store as well as your rights. Inquire on how you can access your unit manually when the power is out. Use a lock that cannot easily be cut or tampered with.

KEEP A LIST

When you have items stored in multiple locations, it's easy to lose track of where everything resides. If you forget where you stashed an item, you may not be able to locate it when you really need it the most—or you may end up buying it again only to find out later you had it all along. Make a list of your items and where each one is stored. Keep the list updated as you add or use your supplies. Place the list somewhere you can access it easily such as the refrigerator door or on a bulletin board.

About the Author *Bernie Carr is the founder of apartmentprepper.com, a blog about family preparedness in an apartment setting. Her books include* The Prepper's Pocket Guide: 101 Easy Things You Can Do to Ready Your Home for a Disaster, Jake and Miller's Big Adventure, The Penny-Pinching Prepper *and* How to Prepare for Emergencies on a $50 Budget. *Her latest e-book,* Frugal DIY, *is now available on Amazon.*

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

KEEPING YOUR VALUABLES SAFE.

One way to protect your possessions is to keep them where they go unnoticed.

- **Product Containers** Reuse empty containers and fill them with cash, coins or other valuables. Store them on the shelf with other canned goods and similar items.

- **Unused Appliances** Hide an envelope full of cash in a plastic bag inside a broken printer, in a vacuum cleaner bag or in an old computer tower. Store it in a cluttered closet and it will avoid notice.

- **Pet Supplies** Many households have giant bags of dog or cat food, or cat litter. Store valuables in a sealed plastic container and stash them within the bag's contents.

- **False Electrical Outlet** Use a small hole saw to cut into drywall and install an outlet box and cover. Then use the space inside for storing small items.

To avoid accidentally donating or discarding your valuables, make a master list of all your hiding spots and keep the list in a safe place.

POWER

KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON

PORTABLE SOLUTIONS FOR GENERATING ELECTRICITY

BY JIM COBB

MANKIND SURVIVED FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS WITHOUT IT. ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, AS A SPECIES WE DID OK WITHOUT HAVING ILLUMINATION ON DEMAND. WE SURVIVED AND EVEN THRIVED.

Be sure to store plenty of fuel for your generator, as it won't do you much good without it.

TELL YOU WHAT, THOUGH. Having the ability to generate, store and use electricity can certainly make things easier in the wake of a disaster. In some cases, it can even be life-preserving. While power ranks behind food, water and shelter, it's definitely among the top five or so preparedness priorities.

We're going to limit our discussion to portable means of providing power to your home and devices. Going into any level of detail about whole-house systems would take more space than we have available here. That said, if you can afford the investment in a whole-house generator or a solar power system for the home, by all means do so. Such systems will provide you with tremendous peace of mind and, in some cases, even a few tax breaks.

POWER BANKS

The first line of defense is to pick up a few power banks. They're basically batteries that you charge and then keep around to use for your cellphones and other small devices. They come in a range of physical sizes, with some about as large as a cellphone and others considerably smaller. Power capacities vary as well. This is measured in milliamp-hours, or mAh. To give you a basis for comparison, 10,000 mAh will charge the average modern cellphone 1.5 times. So, if you pick up a 20,000 mAh power bank, you can charge your phone roughly three times. Tablets will take a bit more to charge.

The other specification to know is the wattage. This tells you how quickly it can be charged and how fast it will charge your devices. For example, an 18-watt power bank will charge almost double as fast as a 10 W one will. If charging speed is important to you, look for higher wattage power banks.

Some power banks today have onboard cables, which is a nice feature. This way, you don't need to hunt for the proper cord. The power bank I use most often has an iPhone cable along with two different USB plugs, in addition to a standard USB outlet.

Another option is to go with a wireless power bank. These will charge compatible devices without the need for them to be tethered together. That's convenient, as there aren't any cords to cause problems. But, you need to ensure your devices are able to be charged wirelessly. Also worth considering is that the power bank and the device need to be in contact for the charging to occur. If you're carrying them in a pack or pocket, jostling around could separate the two and sever the connection. That's less of an issue if you're using cords.

PORTABLE GENERATORS

These can provide serious levels of power for your use. They are rated based on the wattage they produce. Start your search by making a list of the appliances you feel you absolutely need available during an extended power outage. Determine the wattage for each of them, which is usually found on a sticker or label on the back of the appliance. Make note of any that specify a surge wattage figure. That's how much it takes to actually start the unit. This is common with

IF YOU HAVE A GENERATOR AND A WORKING FREEZER, OFFER TO HELP NEIGHBORS SAVE FOOD.

Portable generators aren't cheap, but they can save money over time by reducing loss from spoiled food and such.

Portable generators are a valuable addition to emergency preps, but they must be maintained so that they'll be ready to work when needed. Follow the instructions in the owner's manual.

things like air conditioners and refrigerators. After they start, they settle down into a smaller wattage consumption. But you need to account for that surge wattage figure in your calculations.

Add up all of the wattage figures and that will give you the minimum wattage you want in your portable generator. While it might be wise to scale up just a touch to account for additional appliances that get added to the mix later, the larger the generator is, the more fuel it will take to operate.

Most portable generators run on gasoline, while some are duel fueled with gas or liquid propane. The latter has an advantage of burning cleaner and thus leading to fewer engine issues. Make sure you have plenty of fuel on hand at all times. In the wake of a major disaster, fuel sources are among the first services to become unavailable as demand quickly outpaces supply. Gasoline should be stored in a detached structure, such as a shed, away from the home. Many experts recommend adding a fuel stabilizer to gas that will be stored for long periods of time.

These engines will produce carbon monoxide and should never be run indoors. Locate the generator at least 20 feet away from the home and well away from air conditioner units so that the fumes aren't just sucked into the home. Depending on your living situation, you should ensure that you're not pointing the exhaust directly at a neighbor's home as well. A generator can't sit out in the rain or snow. It should be protected without enclosing it entirely. What has worked

well for some is to simply set up a folding table over the generator.

Generators aren't quiet. Those who live nearby will quickly discern that you have one. If they aren't similarly equipped, they might stop by to ask if they can charge their phones or otherwise borrow a cup of electricity, so to speak. Handle that as you see fit.

You should test-fire and run your generator on a regular basis—at least a few times a year. This helps to keep things running smoothly. If a problem comes up, it's better to deal with it right way so that the generator is in proper working order when you truly need it.

SOLAR GENERATORS

Calling these generators is a misnomer, as they don't actually generate anything. Instead, they convert solar energy to electricity and store it in large batteries. These systems tend to be rather pricey, particularly when you add in several portable solar panels. And you'll need somewhere you can set up those solar panels on a regular basis to charge the battery inside the generator.

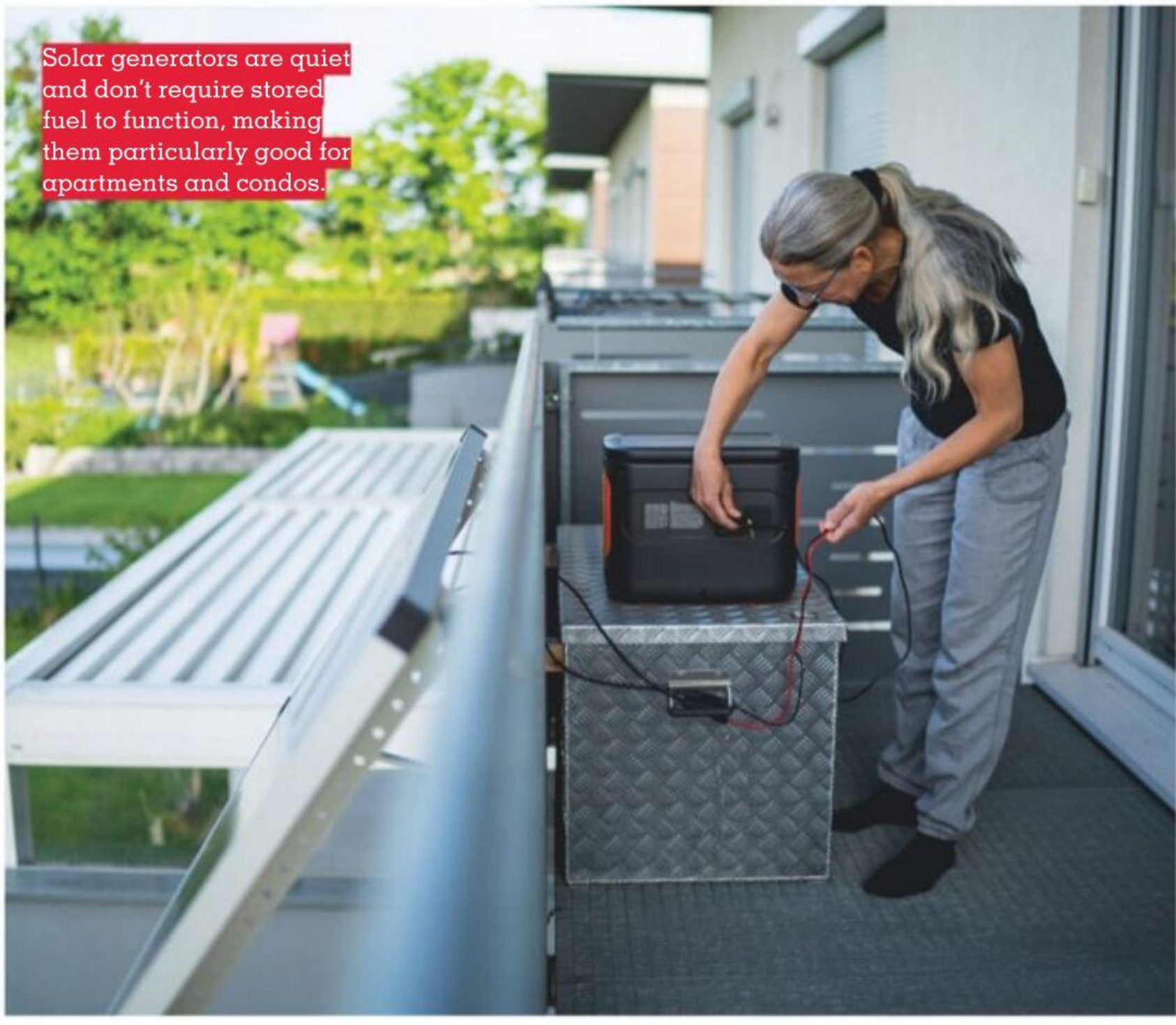
But solar generators are silent, which can be a tremendous benefit in some situations. They can also be used indoors without any dangerous fumes. We have a Jackery system that we've used over the past few years in various ways. We spent about two weeks remodeling a detached garage and installing new siding. Because of the nature of the project, we had to shut down power to the structure, so we relied on the Jackery solar generator to power all of our tools, including a large chop saw. It performed swimmingly, just as it has during power outages as well as on camping trips.

As with portable generators, use your wattage figures to determine the size of solar generator you need. You'll also need solar panels that are compatible with the generator to power it.

While electricity isn't truly necessary for pure survival for most people, having a reliable source for even a limited amount of it can sure make life easier in an already stressful situation.

INVERTER GENERATORS

These are a type of portable generator that tend to be a little more expensive than conventional models, but they are quieter and better suited for sensitive electronics. They are also more fuel-efficient than traditional generators. They adjust the engine speed, and thus fuel consumption, based on the power being used. A basic generator is just on or off. Inverter generators tend to be a little smaller and lighter than their conventional counterparts, which can be beneficial if you'll be moving it around a lot. All of this comes with a higher price tag, but the cost can be worth it in some situations.



Solar generators are quiet and don't require stored fuel to function, making them particularly good for apartments and condos.

[SECTION / 04]

SECURITY & DEFENSE

IT'S IMPORTANT TO LEARN BASIC SKILLS AND STRATEGIES TO PROTECT YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR HOME.

Law enforcement will be spread thin when major disasters strike and their response times will be slow at best.

Being able to walk around without being noticed is a tremendous asset.

GRAY MAN

GOING ON

YOU'VE NO DOUBT HEARD THE SAYING THAT THE SQUEAKY WHEEL GETS THE GREASE, RIGHT? WHAT YOU MIGHT NOT REALIZE IS THAT THE OPPOSITE IS TRUE AS WELL. IF YOU WANT TO AVOID SCRUTINY, THEN REDUCE THE POSSIBILITY OF SQUEAKING, OR CALLING ATTENTION TO YOURSELF.

NOTICED

BLENDING INTO THE CROWD

BY ERIK WINCHESTER

THIS ISN'T ALL THAT DIFFICULT, NOT REALLY. JUST AVOID BEING FLASHY OR LOUD AND YOU'LL BLEND RIGHT IN.

IN A TRADITIONAL SENSE, the term "gray man" refers to a person who not only goes unnoticed, but is also ready and capable to handle themselves in a crisis. For the purposes of our discussion here, we're focusing on the first part of that definition. The goal is simply to be able to move about without calling undue attention to yourself. This achieves a couple of goals. You're less likely to be seen as a target by ne'er-do-wells who might be looking for an easy score. On top of that, you'll be in a better position to get to your bug out location or another safe place without being hassled.

Note that when we say "blend in," we're not referring to camouflage, at least not in the traditional sense. All we mean is that you don't want to stand out in a crowd. If you're noticed, then people might start to think about you. If they think about you, they might find reasons to want to interact with you, and their intentions might run counter to your own safety and well-being.

GOING UNNOTICED MEANS YOU'LL RECEIVE FEWER HASSLES, FROM AUTHORITIES AND OTHERS.

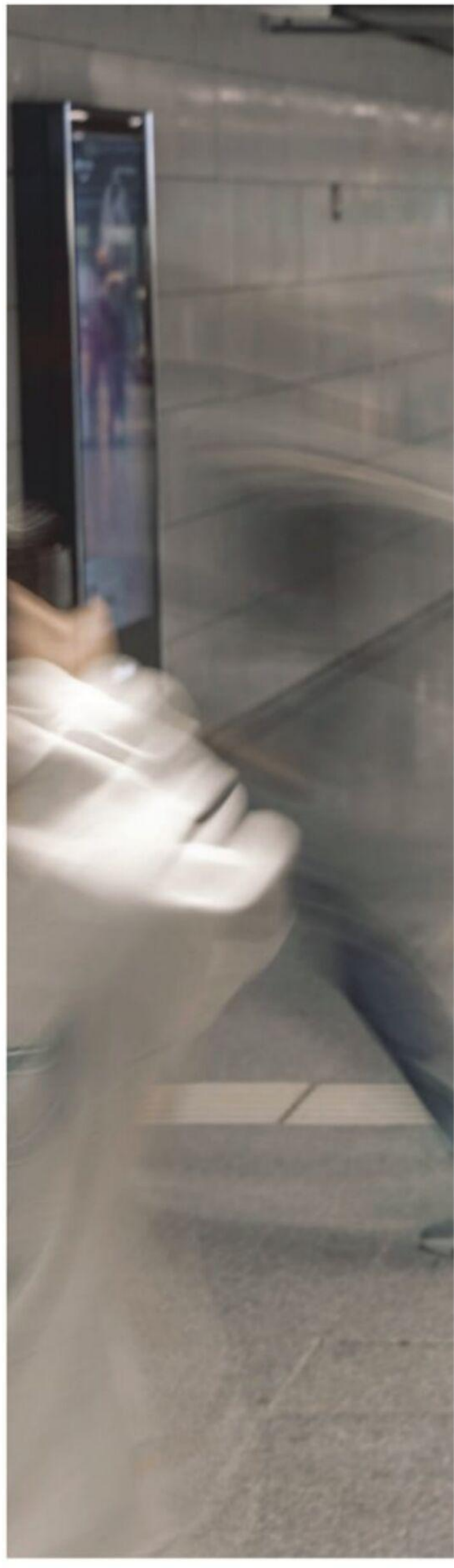
SITUATIONAL AWARENESS IS KEY

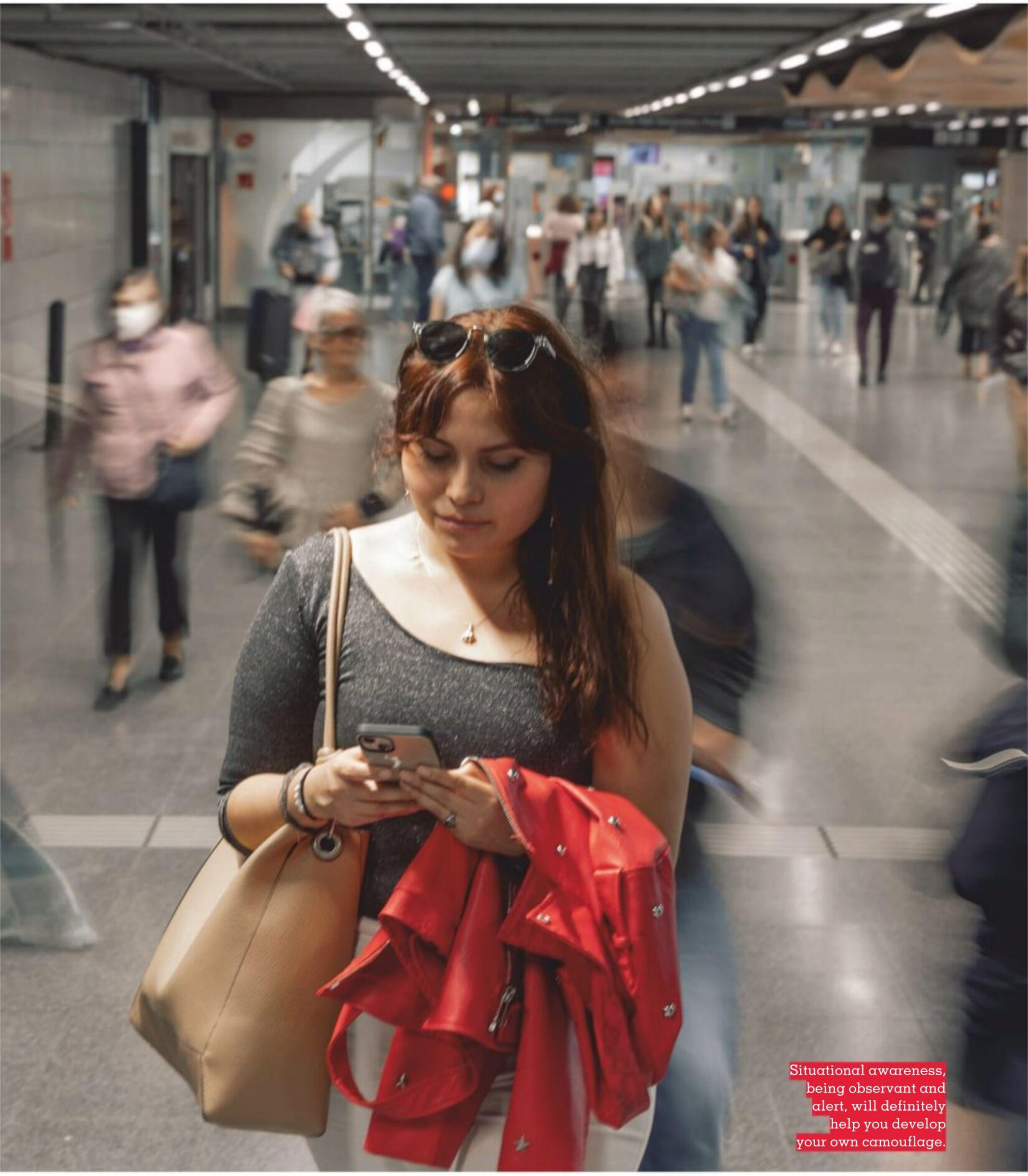
In the security and defense world, we talk a lot about situational awareness. This isn't some sort of mystical concept. It just means paying attention to the world around you. You're looking for anomalies, signs that something isn't normal or right. When you notice an anomaly, you take whatever action you feel is necessary, such as crossing the street to avoid a possible confrontation.

The primary reason for situational awareness is to pick up on possible threats before they become dangerous to you. A secondary benefit is that if you're keenly observant, you'll know the environment and be in a better position to mirror those around you.

GRAY MAN ATTIRE

This is very much a "read the room" sort of concept. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to dressing like a gray man. If you frequent the downtown business district of the city and you're wearing an untucked flannel shirt with a vintage rock band T-shirt under it coupled with dirty cargo




Situational awareness,
being observant and
alert, will definitely
help you develop
your own camouflage.

Use whatever pack you find comfortable and that will carry the things you want or need.

GRAY MAN PACKS

There's a school of thought in prepper circles that says you should avoid any sort of tactical-looking backpacks or attire if you want to blend in. The idea is that if you're carrying what looks like military gear, then it will be presumed that you are indeed in possession of equipment and supplies that others are going to want to take from you, by force if necessary.

My contention is that if the situation has deteriorated to the point that people are being robbed for their backpacks, it won't matter if yours is covered in MOLLE webbing or bears a Hello Kitty logo. If you're bothering to carry it, people will assume you have something of value inside it worth taking. With that in mind, carry whatever is most comfortable for you. In my neck of the woods, I see just as many tactical packs as I do JanSport school backpacks.

pants, you're going to stick out like a sore thumb among the suit-and-tie crowd.

On the other hand, one of those suit-wearing dudes will stick out like a cockroach on a cheesecake down at the Double Deuce tavern during happy hour on Friday.

As a general rule, if you want to be unnoticed, avoid wearing bright clothing. Stick with earth tones. Shirts with sayings or large pictures or symbols should be left at home. While they might be absolutely hilarious, remember that the goal is to avoid attention of any kind. Keep jewelry to a bare minimum, if any at all.

In the wake of a major grid-down disaster, if you're the only one around wearing clean clothes and smelling like soap and shampoo, those around you may pick up on that. Depending on how desperate people are, they might not-so-politely request access to whatever supplies you have that allow you the luxury of being clean. A better option might be to skip a shower here and there and let yourself go a bit.

BEHAVIOR MATTERS

Your physical appearance is just one aspect of the gray man concept. Your behavior and actions are also critical. Think about it like this. We mentioned that situational awareness is all about noticing anomalies, right? That's part and parcel of blending in with the crowd. Let's say you're standing at a second-floor window watching the crowded sidewalk below. Nearly everyone is walking briskly—but there's one guy standing still. Everyone has to veer around him. From above, it might look a lot like water flowing around a rock in the middle of a stream. That rock, in this case a person, is an anomaly and automatically draws attention as a result.

How you behave can be as jarring as that rock. What you say, how you say it, your tone, body language and more can all come into play. We talked a little about this back in the "Crowd Control" story that begins on page 26. If you find yourself in the middle of a large group of people on the street protesting something, that's not the time to express your disagreement with them. Keep your head down and vacate the area as quickly as you can, before someone else comes along to pick a fight with those folks and things get ugly.

If you have to deal with authority figures, such as law enforcement or National Guard members, be respectful and polite. Shouting and gesturing wildly will get their attention, sure, but it'll also make you memorable. On top of that, if you take it too far, they might decide to make an example out of you, which will serve to delay your journey indefinitely.

AVOID EYE CONTACT

As much as possible, avoid making eye contact with other people if you're trying to fade into the woodwork, so to speak. Without getting deep into the science involved, eye contact can stimulate memory formation, which is something you're trying to avoid. It also tends to make people truly notice you. What seems like a couple of lifetimes ago, I spent several years working in retail security. When we would be working undercover on the sales floor, if we made eye contact with someone who was shoplifting, with rare exception they'd immediately ditch whatever they had concealed and then leave the store. Without saying a word, they knew that we knew.

By striving to blend into the crowd, you'll reduce the potential obstacles in your way as you travel from one place to another. If you can avoid confrontations, it will make life so much easier.

Make use of earth tones, like black, brown and gray, and avoid wearing clothing that is sure to draw attention. Keep jewelry at a minimum or out of sight entirely.

IN THE AFTERMATH OF A MAJOR DISASTER, IT'S CRITICAL TO AVOID UNDUE ATTENTION.

TRAINING

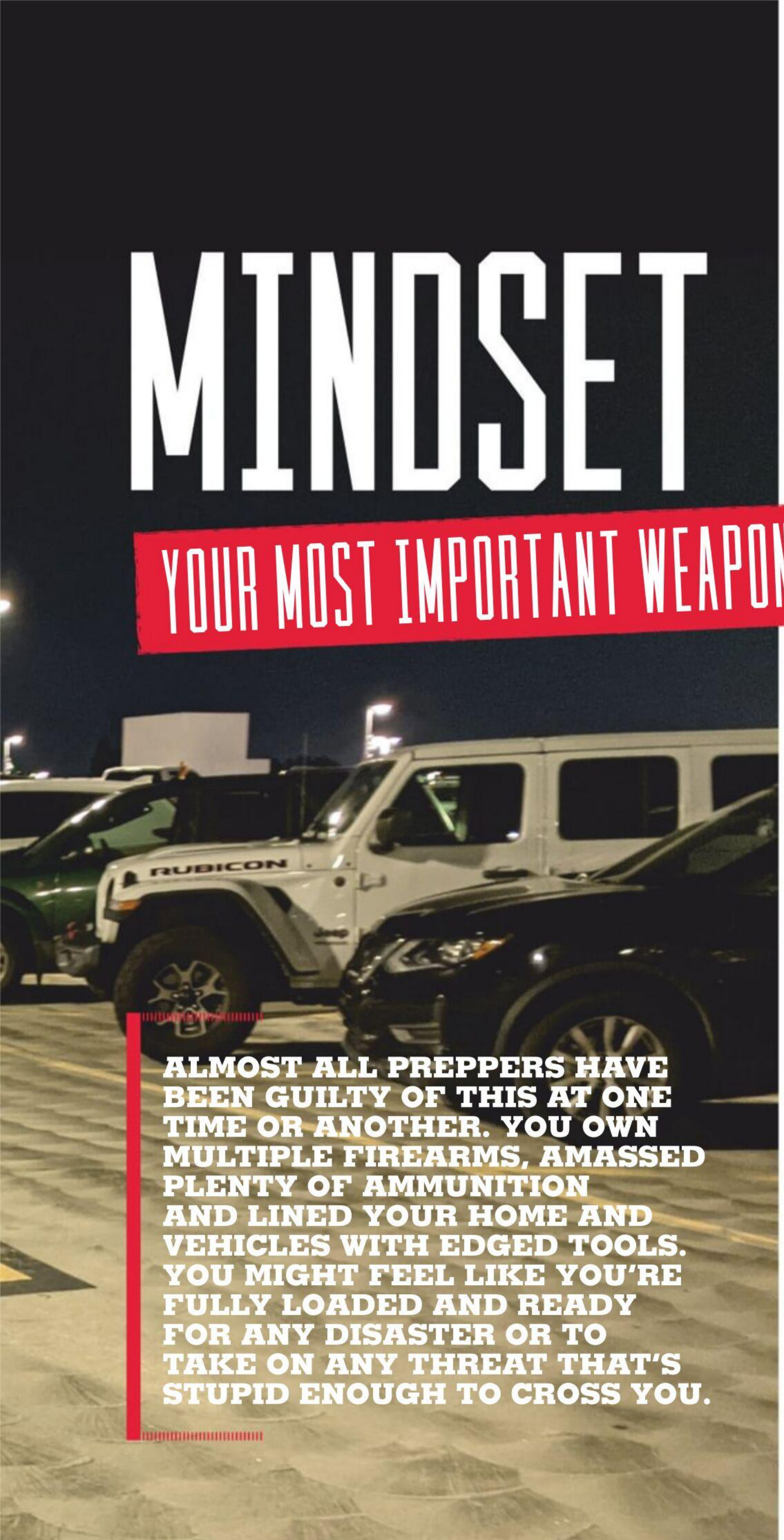
A DEFENSIVE

BY PATRICK VUONG

Situational awareness is an integral component of your overall safety plan.

MINDSET

YOUR MOST IMPORTANT WEAPON



ALMOST ALL PREPPERS HAVE BEEN GUILTY OF THIS AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER. YOU OWN MULTIPLE FIREARMS, AMASSED PLENTY OF AMMUNITION AND LINED YOUR HOME AND VEHICLES WITH EDGED TOOLS. YOU MIGHT FEEL LIKE YOU'RE FULLY LOADED AND READY FOR ANY DISASTER OR TO TAKE ON ANY THREAT THAT'S STUPID ENOUGH TO CROSS YOU.

BUT IN REALITY, YOU might just be suffering from False Sense of Security syndrome.

This is what happens when you value tool set over skill set and mindset. All too often, we get so focused on stockpiling supplies, fortifying our food caches and increasing our arsenal that we neglect our most valuable resource: our brain. Specifically, the part of our mental central processing unit (CPU) that allows us to spot danger and prepare for survival.

And if you fail to strengthen that part of your mind, it can be just as fatal as being stranded in a blizzard.

So, how can you make sure your overabundance of tools is not simply overcompensating for an absence of a defensive mindset? Keep reading to find out how to develop your "martial gray matter."

WHAT IS A DEFENSIVE MINDSET?

Before we develop a defensive mindset, we first have to define what it is. Generally, this is when tactical instructors get all "pseudo-science-y" on you. They'll cite Col. Jeff Cooper's Color Code—which some teachers misinterpret as a way of explaining situational awareness but, according to Cooper, is a scale of mental readiness to use (lethal) force.

Or perhaps they'll tell you about the OODA Loop, which is the cycle of observing, orientating, deciding and then acting. This concept was developed by U.S. Air Force Col. John Boyd and applied to military operations, but it has since been used to explain everything from hand-to-hand combat to business decision-making.

The truth is, to develop a defensive mindset, you don't need to study any of that. You can't gain it simply by reciting a color scheme or memorizing a circuitous flow chart. It's much more layered than that.

But at its core, it is a mental attitude that makes your safety the top priority by interpreting a given situation and then determining how best to physically respond.

DON'T IGNORE YOUR GUT

A defensive CPU must act as not only a radar system but also a security alarm, blaring in your ears the moment you perceive a threat. Ignore it at your peril.

That brings us to what science refers to as the fight-or-flight response. However, what biologists

If you're cornered or with a loved one who can't flee (for example, your grandmother), the right defensive mindset should tell you when to go on the offense.

and most combatives instructors often neglect is the third response: freezing (which includes fainting).

Time and again in my 25-plus years of studying violence as a martial artist and a lifelong prepper, I've watched footage of people so in shock that they end up not running or fighting but rather just standing still—until they've been shot, stabbed or knocked on their butt.

Freezing is a common side effect of the adrenaline dump, which is an innate reaction to help us survive a (real or imagined) threat. Essentially, your body shoots adrenaline into your system, increases your breathing rate and pumps more blood into your muscles to rev up your systems so you can either flee or fight. But despite evolution's instant power-up, a lot of people still freeze. Why? They lack a defensive mindset.

Many victims often say after a crime, "It was like I was in a movie" or "I didn't think it could happened to me." And that's the problem. Without a defensive mindset, people don't consider the possibility of being attacked—let alone have a frame of reference for how fast, brutal and sudden a violent assault can be.

Having a defensive mindset is like having your gut finely tuned to threats. It allows you to subconsciously sense danger and act proactively and decisively in a way that's (hopefully) legal and moral.

FROM MENTAL ATTITUDE TO PHYSICAL ACTION

The next part of developing your martial gray matter is understanding the what and the when. The "what" refers to defining what you're defending. Is it your body? Is it your wife and kids? Is it your property? Certainly, it could be all of the above.

Once you know what you're defending, you have to determine when you'll act. For me, if some thug is acting aggressively toward me, I'll do everything in my power to de-escalate, evade and, if need be, run away. It's not worth it for me to physically engage someone over the smallest slight. I'm less concerned about a physical conflict as I am about the legal battle afterward. And even if I'm cleared by the authorities, there's the inevitable lawsuit that follows any serious use of force.

That's why, when I co-founded Tiga Tactics with Dr. Conrad Bui, we decided to start every one of our combatives courses by teaching our three-stage defensive mindset: Stay alert, stay humble, stay kind. This mental attitude helps us spot and even avoid physical confrontations whenever possible.

However, if the aforementioned thug were to lay a hand on my wife, you'd better believe I would act to end the threat as quickly and violently as possible. That's the line in the sand that I've drawn. And it's one you'll want to determine for yourself long before you ever get hands-on with a criminal. Because the last place you want to figure out when to use your firearm or folding knife is in

MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT: DEFENSE IS AS MUCH MENTAL AS IT IS PHYSICAL. DON'T NEGLECT EITHER ONE.

the middle of getting your brains bashed in by a rioter with a skateboard.

WARRIOR MINDSET WORKOUTS

A big part of a defensive mindset is what the cool kids nowadays call situational awareness. You can develop situational awareness through a wide range of mental exercises. Here are just three examples.

Spot the E's I'm talking about exits, entrances, (potential) enemies, and (fire) extinguishers. Why? It primes my brain to look for threats and solutions, which is essential for the next exercise.

Seek out defense training that mirrors real-world situations rather than only focusing on empty forms and tournament rules.

The "What If?" Game Whenever I'm at a restaurant, I ask myself hypothetical questions like "What would I do if a robber stormed in?" and "What if a car suddenly plowed through the front entrance?" It allows me to not only envision potential dangers and my responses to them, but also trains my eyes to scan my environment.

Watch the Hands A key to avoiding a surprise assault is to spot pre-attack indicators, and that often involves watching a suspect's hands. Sometimes it's as obvious as balled-up fists, but sometimes it's more subtle, like a guy constantly pulling up his pants or touching the outside of his right hip (both are indicators that he might have a weapon).

DEFENSIVE MINDSET SUCCESS

This is the secret to achieving the mental attitude of a warrior: Pair up mindset with skill set—more specifically, pair it up with consistent, realistic, and progressive training. Don't believe me? Let's try a fire-starting analogy.

Say you understand how vital fire is to wilderness survival. So, you read books on fire-starting and watch dozens of YouTube tutorials on how to use a bow drill—but you've never once practiced it. How likely are you to succeed in sparking a fire if you were suddenly stranded with no lighter or tools? How do you think you'd do when compared to a teen Eagle Scout who's been using a bow drill every month since he was 8 years old?

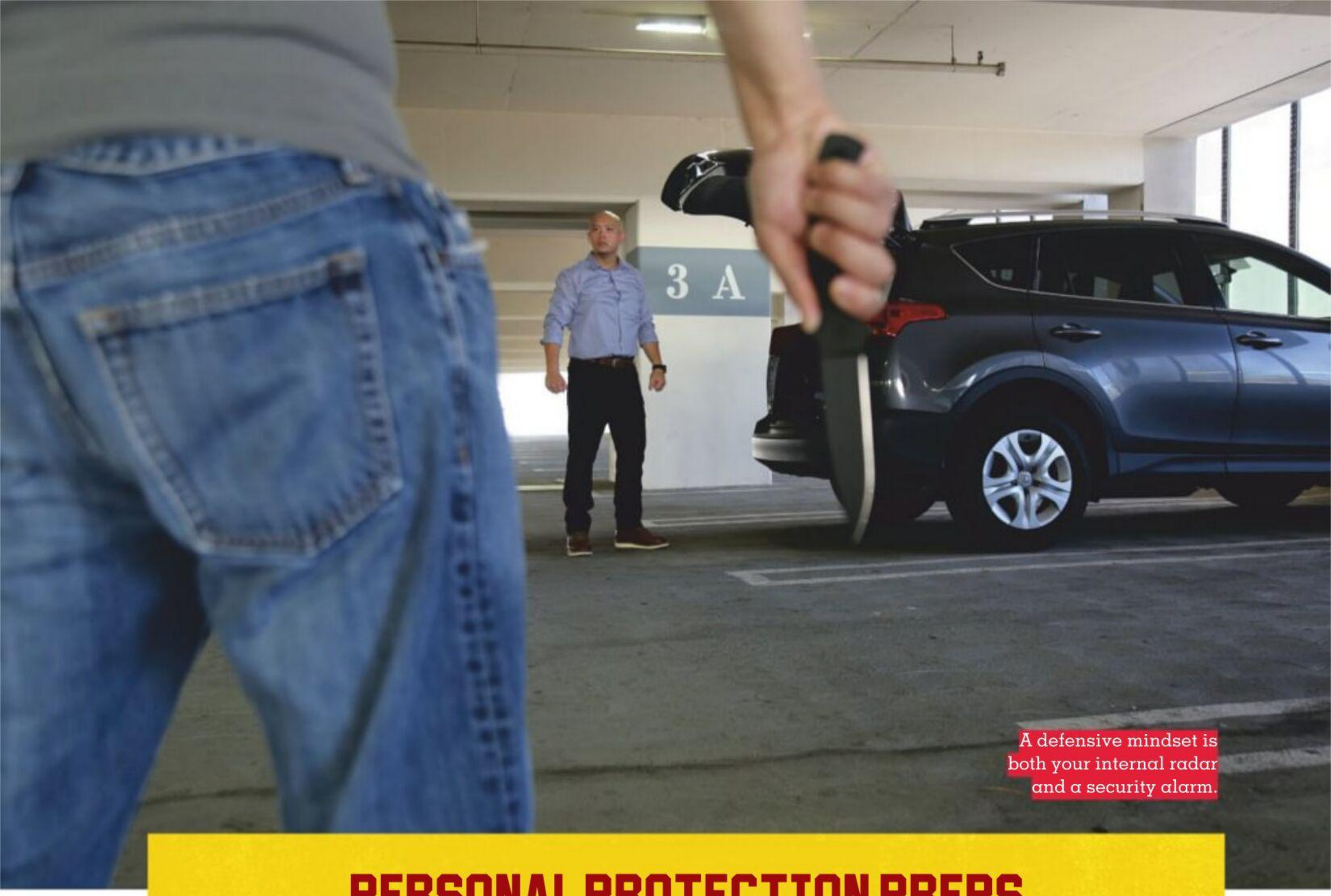
The same goes for defending yourself and your family in a life-and-death situation. You can read all the books and watch all the videos, but if you never pressure-test your knowledge, you're most likely going to fail when it matters most.

I'm a big advocate for researching how criminals actually attack and then simulating those attacks with trusted training partners in a safe, yet fun, environment. Pad up with safety equipment, start slow and light, then progressively increase the intensity until you're going at full speed and power.

It's there, at the edge of failure, where you'll learn if your mindset, skill set and tool set are working as one. But even if you don't have the luxury of pressure-testing with gear and friends, getting any kind of regular self-defense training is essential to strengthening your martial gray matter.

False Sense of Security syndrome can afflict anyone. And it doesn't matter how many rounds of ammo you store, how many firearms you own and how many knives you stash around the house; none of those tool sets provide a cure if you don't first pair physical skill sets with the right defensive mindset.

About the Author *Patrick Vuong is a lifelong prepper based in Southern California. He's also the co-founder of Tiga Tactics, a combatives training company. He's a certified pistol instructor in addition to teaching kung fu, kenpo karate, women's self-defense and the bladed art of pekiti-tirsia kali. Visit streetambushsurvival.com for more information.*



A defensive mindset is both your internal radar and a security alarm.

PERSONAL PROTECTION PREPS

COMMON ERRORS TO AVOID.

Self-defense training should be an essential part of any prepper's survival plans. After all, how are you going to maintain your family's security and resources in a world filled with the ill-prepared, desperate and just plain evil? That said, here are some things you should avoid.

Rely on the Weapon: "I'll just shoot 'em." People who give this pat response have no clue how fast an attack is, let alone have done any training for one. Only the foolish would spend $1,500 on a gun or a knife and invest $0 on training with it. Instead, spend $500 on the weapon and $1,000 on the training. Why?

Unless you're a cop or a soldier, you won't be walking around with a weapon in your hand. That means you'll most likely be empty-handed when faced with a lethal threat. Learn some basic footwork and empty-hand combatives so you can create space and time to earn your draw.

Ignore Research and Reality: I love martial arts. Sadly, a lot of martial arts teachers simply regurgitate the ancient techniques they learned without questioning them. Worse yet, they never study how criminals prey on others.

If you train in a martial art, use the Web to watch how thugs actually attack. Then gear up in safety equipment and ask your training partners to "assault" you to find ways to adapt your techniques in realistic ways.

Don't Practice: Knowing and doing are two totally different things. Sadly, a lot of people rely on the former but never do the latter.

They assume that watching a YouTube tutorial on choke holds or collecting an arsenal of guns will keep them safe.

Whether it's striking, shooting or grappling, some form of self-defense training will always be better than none. So, get out there and get to training, because the bad guys are always hunting for their next unprepared prey.

Our largest muscles are in our legs, making them powerful weapons.

COMBATIVES

STAND & DELIVER

PRACTICAL SELF-DEFENSE

BY CRAIG CAUDILL

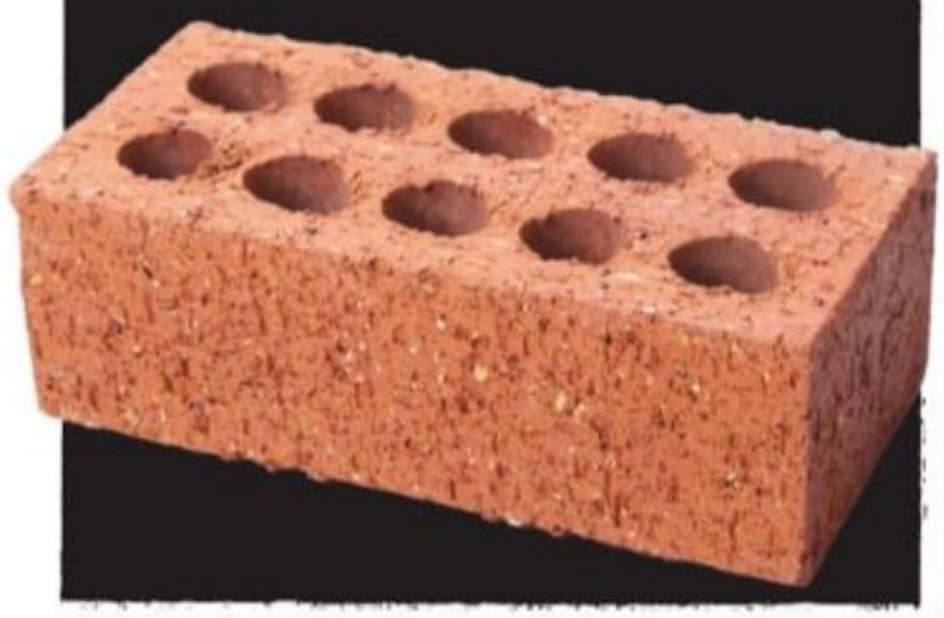
WELL OVER A DECADE AGO, I WAS TEACHING A SELF-DEFENSE CLASS TO A GROUP OF HIGH SCHOOL-AGE STUDENTS WHEN A LOCAL NEWS REPORTER WHO WAS DOING A STORY ON THE EVENT ASKED ME A QUESTION THAT DUMBFOUNDED ME. SHE ASKED, "WOULDN'T IT BE BETTER IF I LET A RAPIST GO AHEAD AND RAPE ME, SO THAT HE DOESN'T KILL ME INSTEAD?" THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION IS NOT JUST NO, BUT HECK NO!

While few people can condition and train themselves to be martial arts champions, we can all learn some basic defensive moves that can help us escape from those who wish to harm us.

PHYSICAL ASSAULT happens to both men and women at a surprisingly high rate over a lifetime. A recent study by the Department of Justice determined that 89% of males and 73% of females will be the victim of a violent crime (rape, robbery, assault) at some point after the age of 13. As with most things, I am an advocate of developing your mindset, skills, tactics and gear when it comes to all forms of survival, including physical assault. I am a supporter and trainer of people using self-defense tools (flashlight, knife, firearm) for protection.

ANYTHING GOES...

In a true life-or-death fight, there is only one rule: Do whatever it takes to survive. Quite literally, anything goes. Grab whatever is at hand, such as a rock, brick or large stick, to strike your attacker. Gouge their eyes or hook a cheek and pull as hard as you can. Grab their groin, squeeze and pull. Bite, kick, scratch. Pull hair. The objective is to return home to your family; don't let anyone or anything stand in your way.



If you have not started training with them, you should. However, there are a are a few weapons that each of us carries with us every day that we can also use for our defense. Those weapons are our hands, elbows, knees, feet and head. I focus attention on using them because they work even when under an extreme amount of stress.

There are several physiological changes that occur to those who find themselves in the middle of a physical assault. You have a narrowing of your vision, basically losing your peripheral sight. You have auditory exclusion, which means you do not hear normally. Your blood pressure rises, and your heart beats faster. You have an adrenaline dump, and most important for our discussion here, you lose a fair amount of fine motor function. These are all safety mechanisms and they are very good at assisting you in defending yourself.

However, unless we train and fight on a regular basis, when we lose fine motor function, we lose the ability to manipulate items, such as a weapon or key fob, or to pull out a knife or flashlight. However, your body can use gross motor movements even under all those stressors, with little training. That is where these five weapons come into play. Consider these tips as a way for beginners to get started with self-defense. Someone trained in martial arts, defensive tactics or combatives may use them in different ways.

HANDS

If the typical untrained person takes their hand, makes a fist and then strikes someone in the head with it, they have most likely set themselves up to have a broken hand. There are two ways I like to use my hands for self-defense. The first is to make that same fist but instead of striking with my fingers in front, strike down with the underside of my hand and palm. This is often referred to as a hammer strike. The other way to use your hands is to use the base of your palm to strike rather than a fist. The palm is then more in line with the forearm, which gives it stability.

ELBOWS

Elbows are a great tool to utilize when an aggressor has closed the gap and is closer than you care for them to be. Even if a person is in body-to-body contact with you, elbow strikes can be a game changer. Keep in mind you should use either the area immediately below or above the elbow to strike with. The actual elbow of the arm contains the funny bone, so hitting a hard object, such as someone's head, with it will cause you significant pain.

KNEES

Your knees are another good choice when it comes to close-range defense. They are also very powerful. Anytime you put together

A strong elbow strike to the face is a great way to break someone's hold on you.

the largest muscle groups of the human body and use them to strike someone, you are likely to get the needed results.

FEET

Your feet work much as your hands do: Try using a soccer-style kick, and you may just wind up with a broken foot. A broken foot means that you will lose stability and will therefore be more vulnerable. When kicking forward, I use the heel of my foot, much like I use the base of my palm. This gives me a good push kick on a portion of my foot that is supported with the leg in line with it. I also use the same area when kicking backward, with what is often referred to as a donkey kick. That is a powerful tool to use against an aggressor who has come up behind you.

HEAD

Using a good head butt is great for the movies, but in all honesty, it takes a fair amount of practice to employ without giving yourself whiplash. Quite frankly, it doesn't work at all as you see it in the movies. You have to keep your spine in a straight line and use your head to ram your attacker, more so than whipping your head to strike your attacker.

TARGETS

There are five areas of the human body that are

BEING ARMED IS IDEAL, BUT THERE ARE MANY REASONS WHY THAT MIGHT NOT BE FEASIBLE OR PRACTICAL.

In the aftermath of a major disaster, looters may become a serious issue. Be ready to handle them.

vulnerable to attack, no matter how strong one is. They are the face, throat, groin, knees and feet. Each can be struck to great effect. You may see martial artists practicing a prearranged movement of striking patterns. For those who do not engage in such activity, if an aggressor attacks you, I would suggest that you use your weapons to attack one or all of your aggressor's vulnerable areas.

This is where our mindset must deviate from what we see in the movies and on TV. One punch is very rarely going to be all you need. If you are attacked and have to defend your life, you must respond with surprise, speed and a high degree of violent action.

Do everything you can to avoid fights and confrontations—but if you cannot avoid them, you need to flip the switch, just like an animal. Use your five weapons against one or all of an aggressor's vulnerable areas until there is no longer a threat. This means that either they have been incapacitated or you can get away from them.

The goal in any violent encounter is to be able to make it back home at the end of the day, or night, as the case may be. It isn't about revenge. It isn't about defending honor or ego. It's about seeing your spouse and children again, as well as keeping them safe from those who would do them harm. It's really that simple. Do whatever it takes to make that happen.

SELF-DEFENSE IN REAL LIFE BEARS NO RESEMBLANCE TO WHAT YOU SEE ON TV OR IN THE MOVIES.

This has been just a brief look at a very small aspect of self-defense, but understanding these concepts and skills is vital to your own protection. It is worth it to invest time, energy and money into training to become effective. Your training should include avoidance and awareness strategies as well as armed and unarmed techniques. As we've said elsewhere, the easiest fight to win is the one that never has to happen. But if it does, win at all costs.

The goal is to get away from your attacker and live to fight another day. There are no rules when it comes to real-world self-defense. Do whatever it takes to prevail. There is no such thing as a fair fight.

About the Author *Craig Caudill is the owner of Nature Reliance School and the author of* Extreme Wilderness Survival *and* Ultimate Wilderness Gear. *Craig holds advanced black-belt degrees in judo, iaido and aikido and has regularly trained in Krav Maga and Filipino stick and knife fighting.*

COMMUNITY

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

WORKING TOGETHER FOR SAFETY & SECURITY

BY CHRISTOPHER NYERGES

"I DON'T KNOW MY NEIGHBORS, BUT I KNOW I DON'T LIKE THEM." SUCH SENTIMENTS ARE NEVER A GOOD THING, BUT IT IS ESPECIALLY BAD IF THAT IS HOW YOU FEEL WHEN A MAJOR DISASTER OCCURS. THERE ARE MANY BENEFITS THAT CAN RESULT FROM BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEM.

Keeping your eyes
open for potential trouble
doesn't make you a stalker;
it makes you careful.

THE LEADERSHIP WILL MAKE OR BREAK THE GROUP. THEY NEED TO BE ORGANIZED AND READY TO PUT IN THE WORK.

WHEN I HEAR PEOPLE SAY that they don't like their neighbors, I'm aware that it's a symptom of something else, perhaps the tightness of residing in a city. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of an urban disaster, you will be there with the people who live around you. It is in everyone's best interest that you get to know them and find ways to work with them in normal times so that you have a network in place if a crisis ever occurs.

One of the best tools for this is a neighborhood watch program.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

I'll admit it. I had lived in my hilly section of Los Angeles for nearly 10 years yet barely knew any of my neighbors. I was very active with a nonprofit group that met in that neighborhood, and the founder kept pushing all of us to be more organized. He wasn't necessarily suggesting this for emergencies, but just to reap the benefits of neighbors working and communicating together.

I learned about other areas that had a watch program and by talking to them, I found that these organizations do not just arise spontaneously. Someone must step forward and take charge. I became that person for a period of about 15 years.

Since we were starting from scratch, a few of us brainstormed to figure out how large of an area we wanted to cover. The primary neighborhood consisted of two residential streets, shaped sort of like the letter "T." All of these people saw their neighbors' houses all

New Orleans residents are known for their resilience in the face of tragedy.

the time, so they were a natural fit. We also included some of the neighbors whose places were on the back side of that "T."

I drew a map of the area with a square for each home, labeling each with the house address. Over the course of maybe two weeks, I went to every single house and talked to the residents. This had many benefits. For one, I got to meet everyone in the neighborhood, which was no small feat! Most of them really liked the idea, and I wrote their names and phone numbers on the map. I told them that when the map was done, everyone would get a copy.

Once I had done this footwork, I found a neighbor who was centrally located and who was willing to host our first meeting. Then, when I went back to give every interested neighbor a copy of the completed map, I also gave them an invitation to the event.

COMING TOGETHER

Since we had never done this before, we weren't sure when to schedule it. We knew that we could never please everyone when it came to setting the meeting time, but we tried to determine a day when the most people could attend. We figured that it was not wise to schedule on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday night. Most people worked during the day, so that left Monday through Thursday evenings. We settled on a Tuesday night meeting at 7 p.m., which wasn't too late but gave people time to get home from their jobs.

All of these might seem like boring details, but we learned that the more we considered everyone's schedule, and made accommodations for them, the better turnout we'd ultimately have.

We served coffee, soft drinks and cookies at that first meeting, and we had a very loose agenda. Perhaps 15 people showed up, and most of the meeting was spent getting to know each other. One of the organizers shared the local neighborhood crime statistics he'd gotten from the local police. These stats included all the crimes closest to where we lived, things like burglaries, car thefts and assaults. Many of the attendees had no idea the level of crime that was occurring all around us. Most of the members of the

A neighborhood watch program is about more than just security. It's about supporting one another during an emergency.

THIS IS A VOLUNTEER EFFORT AND IT REQUIRES CONSTANT WORK BY LEADERS.

HISTORY OF NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

In the late 1960s, an increase in crime heightened the need for a crime-prevention initiative involving local citizens. The National Sheriffs' Association created the National Neighborhood Watch (NNW) program in 1972.

After 9/11, NNW expanded to focus on disaster preparedness, emergency response and terrorism awareness.

According to nnw.org, "From the earliest studies on 'communities and crime,' (Shaw and McKay) to much more recent works (Walker, 1993), research has shown that there is a link between areas with high crime rates and neighborhoods characterized by a heterogeneity of economics and ethnicity, high levels of population turnover and transience, and other physical and economic conditions. Most of this line of research has concluded that crime is higher in 'socially disorganized areas' marked by weakened informal control due to an erosion of shared norms. Since formal control organizations (specifically law enforcement) cannot be in all areas at one time, informal control of residents is necessary if that community is to experience low crime rates. When neighborhoods become disorganized, the people and institutions that once assisted in maintaining standards of behavior no longer hold such status, resulting in a breakdown in informal control. This, in turn, produces high crime rates."

fledgling group agreed to call each other if something unusual was seen at a neighbor's house. There was a bit of discussion about not wanting to be nosy, but still wanting to err on the side of being cautious.

I always brought the map to the neighborhood watch meetings and updated phone numbers, then made new copies for the whole community. In fact, a few people told me that they really valued that map and that they had it taped to their refrigerator or office wall. Over time, people move away, new people move in, and it's necessary to constantly focus your energies on the people who are actively participating in the watch.

Besides simply preventing crime, there are many residual benefits of getting to know your neighbors. We would ask people who attended what they did for a living, and we learned that one man was a printer, and he offered to give discounts to any of the neighbors who needed printing services. One man was a plumber and he constantly gave advice on plumbing jobs. One woman was a stockbroker, and she would share periodic financial guidance. We got to know who did what, and we got to trust the people who lived in our area.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

OK, you've got a neighborhood watch organization going. Now what?

Let's say a neighbor thinks there's a break-in in progress. Someone calls the police and a few other neighbors. The police arrive within minutes, arrest the criminal, and take him away. Everyone is happy.

Or, someone sees a strange car in your driveway and calls you to find out if you're home and OK. They even know how to speak in code in case a burglar is holding you at gunpoint, making sure you don't say the wrong thing. But everything turns out fine.

This is a volunteer effort, and it requires a constant effort by at least a few leaders to keep it going and keep it effective.

Neighbors who already communicate and interact might have a very dynamic organization and pride themselves that crime is low. However, the residential areas that need such a program the most are often typically the hardest to organize. These are neighborhoods where you have many parents working two jobs so they're often not home. You might also have youth with too much time on their hands.

I lived in such an area and many of my neighbors told me that they did not know the people who lived around them and that they had no interest in changing that fact.

Then one day it happened. A young local thug broke into a home, tied up the elderly homeowner and looted the house. The senior citizen was not hurt, but he was very shaken. He moved out within a few days and sold his house.

I told and retold that story to remind other neighbors that it is to everyone's benefit to have a neighborhood watch program. We got off to a slow start, where we introduced ourselves and exchanged phone numbers. We shared our schedules so everyone had a sense of when people should be home.

To keep things interesting, we would bring in guest speakers for some of our meetings. We had the local councilman come by for a visit and to discuss neighborhood programs. We had a police captain drop by to talk about crime in the area. We had people from other watch programs attend and talk about what they did.

The unseen benefit to these programs is that you're deterring crime when it becomes known that neighbors are watching.

The secret to operating a successful watch program is for everyone to play a part. The neighborhoods with the most effective organizations are those where many residents take responsibility for their neighborhoods and do it in a timely and caring way. And again, this goes well beyond just calling one another when bumps in the night are heard. It's about watching out for one another in good times and in bad, offering a helping hand when it's needed. This is particularly important during and after disasters.

About the Author

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Doorbell cameras are extremely useful.

If a neighborhood can work together, they can watch out for each other, as well as accomplish large goals quickly.

HOME SECURITY

SAFEKEEPING WHAT'S YOURS

COMMONSENSE APPROACHES TO PROTECTION

BY ERIK WINCHESTER

Thieves can be a real issue in the wake of disasters.

THIS IS AN AREA WHERE IT SEEMS AS THOUGH PEOPLE TEND TO EITHER OVERCOMPENSATE OR SHORT-CHANGE. YES, IT'S ABSOLUTELY AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN YOUR OVERALL PREPAREDNESS PLAN, NO QUESTION ABOUT IT.

BUT AT THE SAME TIME, IF you've invested tens of thousands of dollars into armaments and ammunition, but you barely have enough food for a week at any given time, you may want to rethink priorities and balance things out a little better.

With that out of the way, let's look at some ways you can increase your home security without having to turn it into a prison. These recommendations and tactics could prove particularly useful if there is civil unrest in or near your neighborhood.

HOME HARDENING

The best door and window locks ever made don't do much good if they aren't used. While they won't necessarily stop a determined home invader, good locks may at least slow them down a bit—and they'll certainly deter the more casual sorts of burglars. Every exterior door should have a deadbolt as well as a locking doorknob.

While you're at it, the door hinges were probably attached using screws that

A break-in can be terrifying, but there are ways to mitigate the risk of it happening.

are an inch or less long. Replace them with 3-inch wood screws. Doing so will afford a much higher level of protection. The easiest way to do this is to replace each screw one at a time. Otherwise, you'll be trying to balance the door with one hand while driving screws with the other.

One of the most overlooked entry points is the door that leads from the garage to the house. Very few people keep that door locked. All the burglar has to do is break into the garage, which itself is not insurmountable, then walk right into the home.

Leaving a spare house key hidden somewhere isn't a horrible idea in and of itself. It's the hiding places themselves that get people in trouble. Skip the fake rocks, as every seasoned burglar will spot those in an instant. Under a planter or door mat are also nonstarters. The best hiding places are well away from the door itself. When I was a kid, dad hung a key behind a gutter downspout that ran down the back corner of the garage. Of course, if you have a trusted neighbor, you could just leave a key with them and hope that they're home if you ever need it.

Install motion-activated lights on all sides of the home if possible. At the least, make sure they're in use at every entrance. Consider these lights as a form of burglar alarm. If the light goes on, that should prompt you to get up and see what tripped the sensor. It might be a raccoon or opossum, but it might also be the meth addict from three doors down looking for something they can quickly grab and pawn.

A couple of powerful flashlights are also good to have on hand, in case you need to explore further what made the noise in the backyard. I prefer Streamlight products. I own several and they've never let me down.

Pay attention to your landscaping. Shrubs with long thorns, such as hawthorn, planted under all ground-level windows will help deter anyone from hiding there while they try to break in. Near the doors, avoid planting anything that someone could hide behind as you walk up late at night.

Security film applied to the inner surface of ground-floor windows isn't a bad idea. While it doesn't entirely prevent someone

IF YOU INVEST IN WEAPONS FOR HOME DEFENSE, SEEK OUT TRAINING AND PRACTICE WITH THEM.

Signs advertising security services can be an effective deterrent, even if you don't actually use the services.

from smashing the window, it will keep the glass together when it's struck, rather than shattering into pieces. If the glass is anchored securely in the frame, it makes the whole break-in process much more difficult. The best way to do this is to remove the glass from the frame, apply the film, then reinstall the glass. If that's beyond your capabilities, apply a bead of clear caulk around the glass after applying the film.

One more consideration is some sort of camera or surveillance system. These have come way down in price in the past few years. They can be hooked into your home network, so you can monitor your home from anywhere on the planet. If movement is detected in your front hallway, for example, an alert is sent to your phone via an app. With just a couple of taps, you're looking at a live video feed, letting you know exactly what's going on, whether that's a burglar sneaking in or your dog doing his best to protect the premises from the evil mailman.

AVOID SILLY SIGNS

While signs like "These premises are protected by Smith & Wesson" can be humorous, as a practical matter they aren't a good idea. They just aren't much of a deterrent. All they really accomplish is advertise to the aspiring burglar that they can probably find firearms inside, which are always desirable targets. All they have to do is bide their time and wait for the place to be empty. I suppose if you never leave your home unattended, that's not a big deal. But most families have obligations that require them to leave the house every now and again.

DEALING WITH HOME INVASION

Let's say that despite all of your efforts, you find someone breaking into your home in the middle of the night. You know for certain it isn't a family member, but someone you don't know and who likely has ill intent.

There are essentially two approaches to consider. The safer option, in most cases, is to retreat to another area of the home and call 911. Tell the dispatcher your location and what's happening. Let the professionals handle things from that point forward. Lock the door to the room you're in and keep quiet until the calvary arrives. The downside to this approach can be the response time. This could take a while, especially if the authorities are already busy dealing with rioting crowds or other unpleasantness.

The other approach is to go on the offensive. If you are armed, ideally with something that goes bang, and you've been trained in its use, do what you feel is necessary and appropriate to deal with the threat. That said, do your homework and have a good, working knowledge of the self-defense laws that apply in your location. Ideally, you should consult with an attorney to make sure you know exactly what is and what is not permissible regarding armed self-defense. While yes, you and your loved ones' safety is the most important consideration, if you're able to accomplish that while also avoiding a legal battle, so much the better.

With that in mind, avoid the use of any sort of injury-causing booby traps. That should be common sense, but the concept still pops up from time to time in prepper discussions about security. Not only are such traps blind, meaning they cannot discern whether it's a burglar or your 3-year-old granddaughter, they're patently illegal in most areas. Remember that neither the judge nor the jury can change the laws. They can only apply existing laws to your case.

When the dust has settled, make two phone calls: one to 911 and the other to your attorney, and not necessarily in that order.

Cameras allow you to put eyes on what's happening if you can't be there in person.

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An aerial image shows smoke from wildfires, including the Eaton Fire and Palisades Fire, in Los Angeles, California.

BEING PREPARED CAN PROVIDE PEACE OF MIND.